

No. 3.

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SHIELD WEEKLY



TRUE DETECTIVE STORIES • STRANGER THAN FICTION

INSPECTOR WATT'S GREAT CAPTURE or The Case of Alvord, the Embezzler

BY ALDEN F. BRADSHAW



PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York City.
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SHIELD WEEKLY

From the
EDITION
FEBRUARY 1901
TAKEN

TRUE DETECTIVE STORIES • STRANGER THAN FICTION

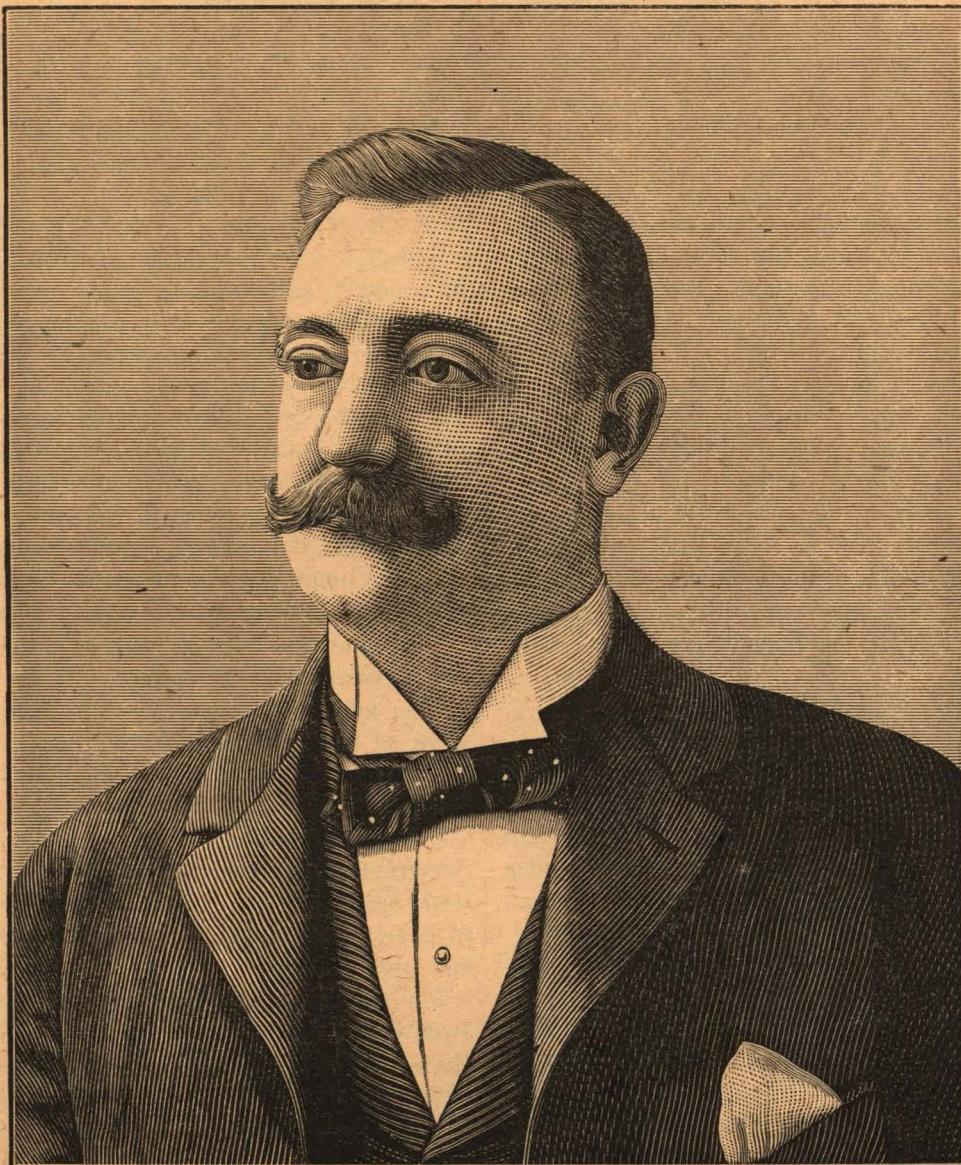
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Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$1.50 per year. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

Entered According to Act of Congress, in the year 1900, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.

No. 3.

72 Canal St., NEW YORK, December 22, 1900. Price, Five Cents.



CHIEF INSPECTOR WATTS.

The head of the detective force of the city of Boston. He figures prominently in the SHIELD WEEKLY stories, and is well known throughout New England as one of the ablest and most efficient police officials in the United States.

Inspector Watts' Great Capture;

OR,

THE CASE OF ALVORD, THE EMBEZZLER.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECRET NOTICE.

It was to come like a bolt from a clear sky!

It was to shock the community, stagger the bankers, send a tremor through sensitive Wall street, and a shudder through all the financial world.

It was to quicken the pulse of the police in every city of the globe, and set beating faster the heart of every town constable and county sheriff the continent over.

It was to startle anew those tireless sleuth hounds of justice, the Inspectors of the Secret Service, as the shrill cry of the huntsman, or the angry snarl of game that breaks cover startles the hounds just loosed from leash.

Seven hundred thousand dollars!

It may be said with a single breath.

The figures may be written with the dash of a pen.

It is not more than a drop in the bucket of the world's wealth—yet it would found a college, establish a hospital, or keep ten thousand families in fuel for a year.

"Let me see that notice once more, Detective Keene."

Despite the significance of the foregoing, the voice of the speaker was coldly calm as if he had asked but the time of day.

He was seated at a roll-top desk occupying nearly the middle of a large, well-appointed office in Pemberton Square, in the City of Boston.

Back of him rose a tall oak cabinet, with numerous small drawers, containing press clippings and the grim histories of criminal cases the world over. On the right side of the large room was a similar structure, bearing upon its polished face in neat gilt letters the significant legend—"Bertillon System of Measurements and Photographs."

This is the great system that now makes up the "Rogues' Gallery" of the police departments of nearly all the large cities of the world; and the room described was the Chief Inspector's private office in the great, grim headquarters building in Pemberton Square, that basement portion allotted to the Inspectors of Police.

The time was evening; the day, the 18th of October; the year, 1900.

The man at the desk was the head and front of the Boston Detective Service and the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Chief Inspector of Police William B. Watts.

The person addressed was standing with one arm resting on the high top of the Chief's desk, and he held in his hand a printed sheet of paper. The bright light of the room fell full upon him.

He was a young man, not more than twenty-five, with an attractive, smoothly shaven face. His figure was tall and rather slight, but as straight as an Indian's arrow.

Detective Sheridan Keene was one of the shrewdest and most discerning of the able body of inspectors so efficiently directed by Chief Inspector Watts.

Chief Watts bowed gravely as he received the paper from his subordinate, and signed the latter to a chair near his desk.

"It is one of the old, old stories, told by far too frequently," he at length said, with some austerity, as his gaze rose to meet that of his companion. "A bank robbed of more than half a million dollars. Shocking! Inexplicable! I cannot understand how such stupendous thefts can be committed in any well-directed institution."

"Nor I, Chief Watts," rejoined Sheridan Keene. "The precise amount of the embezzlement is not specified, is it?"

"No. The theft has just been discovered, but the loss is approximately known. I infer that the books have been manipulated, and may be in bad shape."

"The First National Bank of New York, I think the notice states?"

"Yes, and one of the strongest in the country."

"Is any reason given, Chief Watts, why the defalcation is not immediately made public?" asked Detective Keene.

"No," answered Chief Watts, shortly. "This notice comes secretly through the police, whose temporary silence upon the subject is emphatically required. We are simply asked to make strenuous efforts to locate and arrest one of the assistant clerks, who is absent on a short vacation."

"Which possibly may prove to be a long one!" dryly suggested Keene.

"Possibly, since the clerk is evidently suspected."

"The description given of him is quite precise."

"Yes, fortunately. His name here appears to be Archer or Larcher. The uncertainty is caused by the operator who transmitted the notice. I shall have to get it accurately, and then will begin a quiet search for the man. When he left the bank, it was thought that he was coming to Boston, but if his address was taken, it is not now known, and, perhaps, was destroyed."

"What do you infer, Chief, to be the motive of the bank officers in withholding the publication of the embezzlement?"

"Humph!" and Chief Watts tossed his head. "Most likely they first want to ascer-

tain the precise state of affairs at the bank, and possibly plan to effect a restitution. That is always the way. But there are features in this notice which lead me to doubt whether the bank officers are on the right track. Indeed, I am beginning to think that the case may involve much more of a mystery than they even imagine."

Sheridan Keene was startled slightly. He well knew with what shrewd perception and keen, logical deductions the Chief invariably took hold of a case of this kind and magnitude. He drew a little nearer, asking with interest:

"How so, Chief Watts?"

He little dreamed that this efficient head of the Boston Secret Service had already begun his remarkable analysis of this affair, the culmination of which was destined to startle police circles throughout the country, and place his name on the lips of the entire community.

"To begin with," Chief Watts replied, with forcible earnestness, "this bank has been robbed of nearly a million dollars. What has become of this immense sum of money? No individual can alone and in ordinary ways spend anything like a million dollars without becoming notorious as a gambler, a speculator, or a spendthrift."

"That's true."

"Some underhand scheme, then, has been in operation, if the deficit is anything like what is here reported. If this money had been used openly and above board, suspicion would have been aroused long ago. There is some mystery back of this robbery, and it may involve facts, if not persons, that it will be very essential to discover."

Detective Keene nodded.

"Once more!" continued Chief Watts, with augmented earnestness; "suspicion has evidently been directed upon a clerk, manifestly some subordinate in this bank, who is now absent and may possibly be to some degree involved. But is it probable that any subordinate clerk has alone covered, for any length of time, a shortage like that mentioned, or has even been able to spend, unsuspected, such a large sum of money? No, no! the bank officers must look higher!"

"There is logic in that, Chief!" exclaimed Sheridan Keene, with enthusiasm.

Chief Watts turned his chair nearer, and the young detective instantly knew what was coming.

"You are not now at work on any case, are you, Inspector Keene?"

"Not at present, Chief."

"I want you to investigate this one, under my direction," said Chief Watts, shortly. "You will, as usual, be governed partly by your judgment, and by your discoveries and the developments therefrom; yet, in the main, I wish you to follow my instructions."

"I will do so, Chief," said Keene, eagerly. "What is your plan?"

"I want you to go to New York by the night express," explained the Chief. "On arriving there I think you had better see Captain McClusky, inform him of my theory, and request his co-operation."

"I will do so, sir."

"State the belief that I here have given you, and say that I think it would be well to quietly ascertain who has directed the suspicion of the bank officers against this absent clerk. If an examination of the books of the bank does not plainly show that the clerk is chiefly incriminated, it would be well to quietly investigate the work and habits of the person who mistrusted him."

"I see, Chief."

"Very good, then. Your own discretion will tell you how to work. That is all now, for you have only time to hit the 10.30 train. You may call me up by the long distance telephone in event of any important developments. Prepare to depart at once. I will call a carriage to the door."

CHAPTER II.

IN THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

It was the middle of a busy morning on the New York Stock Exchange when a tall, but well-built young man mounted the stairs leading to one of the Exchange galleries.

The man was Detective Keene.

He had arrived in New York that morning. Learning at headquarters that he could not meet Captain McClusky until afternoon, he had taken a casual observa-

tion of the First National Bank, and then looked into the Stock Exchange.

As he stood loitering carelessly in the doorway looking down on the apparent confusion of men and voices below, two men near him in the gallery caught his attention. Something in their looks and manner led him to observe them, furtively.

Both men were strangers to him, yet he made a study of their faces. This was no new occupation for this constant disciple of Lavater, and Sheridan Keene frequently found a man's face more reliable than his utterances.

Ten minutes before, one of the men had stood beside a Stock Exchange ticker in a broker's office near by, staring at the roll of paper tape—that fatal strip of paper upon which, with formal and unfeeling fingers, the machine records those brief legends that point with mute eloquence to fortunes made and lost, to hearts elated or to hopes destroyed, and to avarice satiated at the cost, perhaps, of human lives and human souls.

He was as if spellbound, his cheeks were pale, his jaws hard set, his every feature sharply drawn.

As the tape came out in little jerks, it seemed like some living thing—some snake that was preparing to wind its coils around his body. As it moved with intermittent twitches, and with an irregular, yet monotonous ticking, it crept out through a small glass dome mounted upon a stand and covering a machine.

"Hello, Jim Greenleaf!" said a voice at the gazer's elbow. "How's the market?"

James Greenleaf looked up as if startled. He was a large, compact man, with short gray hair, a smooth face, and eyes that were small and crafty, if not viciously covetous. He was well dressed, and in his broad, polished shirt front blazed a huge diamond.

This combination of face, figure and diamond was well known in at least three places—Saratoga in its season; the race tracks in theirs; and in Wall street, New York. Jim Greenleaf was said to be by many a "plunger." By those absolutely informed, which were few, he was known to be a "go-between," the third party through whom a man with money, whether his own

or not, may reach a broker or a bookmaker, and gamble without publicity. Of the lot, though he posed as a gentleman, Jim Greenleaf was by far the most unscrupulous.

"Hello, Maxwell!" he rejoined in rasping tones. "The market is all right, but I am all wrong."

"Short, eh?"

"As short as a museum dwarf! And the worst of it is——" He stopped short as he took another glance at the ticker, and then picked up his hat and started to go out.

"Pardon me," he said; "there's a man I must see right away."

As the door closed he made a dash for the elevator, and on reaching the street, ran through the narrow Wall street entrance to the Stock Exchange, and in another moment had reached the gallery. There, standing by the railing, he spied a sallow, angular-featured man, whom he quickly drew apart.

"I've been watching for you, Haskins," he said, in excited whispers. "Where have you been?"

"In Cammon's office. You said you'd meet me there at noon."

"It is not noon yet! Besides, I told you to drop in here first, in case we needed to reach the big finger."

"How about it?"

"This about it!" replied Greenleaf, with suppressed vehemence. "Our margins will be entirely wiped out unless provision against it is speedily made. Everything is going against us. I've been watching for you since the market opened. You must get word to him at once—the usual story and the usual amount!"

The matter engaging these men was evidently very serious. Their intense earnestness betrayed the vital nature of their discussion, and their care against being overheard was plainly significant. Yet such a scene is not uncommon in the corridors adjoining the New York Stock Exchange.

Neither Jim Greenleaf nor his companion noticed the arrival of Detective Keene, who appeared in the doorway at that moment, too far away, however, to overhear their conversation.

The angular features of one turned ugly

and resentful when he replied to the other's censure.

"It's all right to say get word to him at once," he said, with a growl; "but it's easier said than done. He is not at the bank this morning."

"Not there!"

"No, sir; nor is the signal card at his window as usual. I've been by there a dozen times, and I'll swear he has not come in this morning."

"Can he be sick?" gasped Greenleaf, whose own features suddenly wore a pallor like that of illness.

"Possibly that is the matter—and perhaps worse!"

"No, no! He assured me only night before last that no unusual danger existed."

"The usual danger is enough, and greater is always imminent in a case of this kind," was the forcible reply. "One never knows when the lightning will strike!"

"If it is about to strike, we are fools to stand idle here! Do you know where he can be found?"

"How should I know? Of course not!"

"You are positive about his absence?"

"Am I a fool?"

"Well, found he must and shall be!" declared Greenleaf, vehemently. "The liberty of us all is at stake, if the worst has come. Wait here a minute. I will cover at once and pocket a loss. Better a half-loaf than none!"

Leaving Haskins standing in the gallery, he rushed back to the broker's office, making a hurried purchase of several large blocks of stock, and taking a check for his balance of credit. Then he rejoined his friend, saying hurriedly:

"Come with me, now! If the cat really has jumped the bag, the man himself must be forced to jump the country!"

"Where are you going?"

"To look him up, if he's above ground!"

"Where first?"

"At his home in Mt. Vernon."

"It would be worth a little something to know what those fellows were discussing," said Sheridan Keene to himself, with his detective instinct touched to the quick. "I

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would wager against their honesty, or Lavar-
ter is a liar."

Yet he was far from dreaming how closely related his interests were with theirs. He followed them with his gaze till they vanished in the crowd thronging the exit into Wall street; then he decided to return to the office of Captain McClusky.

This significant incident occurred within twenty-four hours of that momentous afternoon, momentous in the life of at least one unhappy man, when the First National Bank of New York closed its doors at the end of its business day, and Cornelius L. Alvord, Jr., walked out of the bank building for the last time.

And for the last time, with no adieu to the scenes in which for twenty years he had been a familiar, pleasing and prominent figure, he departed with the freedom of old, a man as yet unconvicted of heinous crime by the irrefutable evidence of his own crafty handiwork.

Only the man himself could tell the burden he bore, what direful apprehensions weighed him down! He alone could tell what resistless impulse drove him to return an hour later, to skirt with tremulous steps the imposing building, and to peer with wide dilated eyes through its clear plate windows. With a shudder shaking his massive figure, he beheld the bank clerks busily engaged in an examination of the books.

There he stood while the moving crowd eyed him casually and passed on. Little did any person dream that the man he had seen, the well-dressed, important-looking man of affairs, was one of the most clever defaulters the country had ever known.

To the passing multitude there was nothing strange in the man's appearance or manner. He might be waiting for a friend. If, perchance, some one noticed a hunted, worried look in his face, as he stood there nervously clenching his hands, it was credited simply to the strain of a day's operations in Wall street. Perhaps he had narrowly escaped losing a large sum of money on 'Change. It was nothing new to see a man in such a condition at the end of a day's excitement in this money mart.

The occasion for the examination of the

books was not difficult to determine. Its significance spoke in accents not to be ignored. And then and there the truth came home to Cornelius L. Alvord, Jr., with all its force and all its sickening import. From that hour he was an outcast from society. From that hour he became a fugitive from justice—or a felon under the law!

"So at last the chickens have come home to roost!"

He muttered the words brokenly, under his breath. He stood staring for a moment as if undecided; as if there were a battle within between that better self which would have rushed forward and sought relief in confession, and that more cowardly part which fears to face the consequences of its own transgressions.

Then, pale even to marble whiteness, with a quiver of the lips under his light mustache, he braced himself anew by force of will, and turned and moved away—his choice the alternative which held out to him the slender promise of personal freedom only.

It was a momentous decision, one possibly involving consequences as great as those of the evil already done. For from the moment he turned from the past to embrace the unknown future, and vanished, as it were, into the moving world of mankind, he gave inception to what threatened to become the greatest and most expensive man-hunt ever recorded on the pages of criminal history.

CHAPTER III.

SHERIDAN KEENE MAKES A MOVE OF HIS OWN.

That Captain McClusky was deeply impressed with the suggestion of Chief Watts, as presented by Sheridan Keene, was apparent in the fact that, accompanied by the latter, he visited the First National Bank immediately after their interview at headquarters.

Already the chiefs of police in all of the large cities had been startled by the main facts announced in the secret notice which had been issued, and, in all directions officers were actively engaged in a quiet search for a man answering the description of the clerk known to be absent from the bank.

On arriving with Detective Keene, Cap-

tain McClusky immediately led the way to the directors' room, where he found, in earnest consultation, not only Cashier Reed and Vice-President Hine, but also several of the bank directors and the bank's counsel, Mr. Fisher A. Baker.

The unexpected appearance of the New York Chief seemed to create some little consternation; yet courteous greetings were passed, and Captain McClusky came at once to his business.

"I wish to make a few inquiries relative to this embezzlement, gentlemen," he said, firmly. "I would like to know, to begin with, why you are averse to publishing all of the facts, and at once instituting a vigorous search for the guilty party or parties?"

"But Captain McClusky, Captain McClusky!" one of the directors hastened to assuavely interpose, rising to give weight to his words. "There are many things to be considered before taking that decided step."

"What are they?" demanded Captain McClusky, shortly.

"In the first place we are not absolutely certain who is guilty. The books are now being examined. They are in a bad state. We are at present sure only of an enormous deficit. Possibly, when the precise facts are discovered, we may be able to recover some of this money, either through litigation or some other judicious method."

"Then your aim is to effect a restitution, is it?" demanded Captain McClusky, who did not appear at all pleased with the explanation.

"Partly; only partly, sir!" was the reply made, with pacific earnestness. "Really, really, sir, this investigation should not be hastened. It will be best to first know the precise facts, and moderation is very desirable. If you can locate the clerk who is absent—"

"One moment, please! What is the clerk's name—Archer?"

"Yes, sir; as was stated in the notice sent you."

"When was he last at the bank?"

"Several days ago, Captain McClusky; I think on Wednesday last."

"Was his leave of absence requested, Mr. Hine?"

"Yes, it was."

"Did he have the usual vacation annually given your clerks?"

"No, he did not, which was one reason for permitting him to go at this time."

"What did he say when he asked to go away?"

"He merely asked if he could go away for a few days. He had been working hard, and his request was granted."

"Did he say where he intended going?"

"I think he said he wished to visit friends in Boston."

"Did you ask him to give you his address?"

"I did not," was the reply, with a head-shake. "I did not think it necessary."

"Have you his New York address?"

"He lives on West Fifty-seventh street. We have made inquiries there, but his whereabouts is not known."

"What have been Archer's duties here?"

"They have been rather general. At times he has assisted the tellers, and frequently has been called upon by our Mr. Alvord."

"Has he had such access to the books and the funds as would have enabled him to steal more than half a million dollars?" asked Captain McClusky, rather sharply.

"We can better judge of that, Captain, after the books have been thoroughly investigated," was the quick retort. "In an institution of this kind, sir, great thefts are sometimes committed by methods and persons entirely unsuspected."

Captain McClusky frowned, and Sheridan Keene anticipated his next questions.

"What led you first to suspect Archer of the crime?"

"The fact that he had asked for a vacation just at this time. It was suggested by Mr. Alvord as being a very significant fact, hence our immediate action."

"Do the books show that Mr. Alvord may be justified in casting suspicion upon Archer?"

"We cannot tell that, Captain McClusky. As I have already informed you, the accounts are seriously mixed."

"What others of the employees of the bank are absent?"

"Not one, sir!" was the emphatic rejoinder.

"When did Mr. Alvord make this suggestion about Archer?"

"Yesterday afternoon, sir."

"Will you please call him in here, Mr. Hine? I would like to ask him a question."

"He has not come in yet, Captain McClusky, or I would do so. He had business at his home in Mt. Vernon this morning, and was to come into town later in the day."

"Do you expect him?"

"He possibly may not return until to-morrow morning. His absence for brief periods is nothing unusual, sir."

"I infer from your last remark," said Captain McClusky, dryly; "that you mean to imply that Mr. Alvord is quite above suspicion."

"We have always so considered him, sir! He has been with the bank for fully twenty years, and has held positions of the highest trust. To suspect Mr. Alvord——"

"Pshaw! Absurd!" cried one of the directors, and a close friend of the man discussed. "The very idea is nonsense!"

Captain McClusky made no direct reply to this, but his grave face, for a moment turning quite white and severe, spoke volumes. He came forward and rested his palm upon the large center table, saying deeply:

"I came here to get a few facts, if possible, bearing upon this lamentable affair, and not to discuss the relative merits of any of your employees! But there is one thing, gentlemen, that I wish, as Chief of the New York detective force, to impress upon your minds!"

"What is that, Captain?"

"That a great crime has been committed; that both justice and the public good require a rigorous investigation of this case, and the punishment of the criminal! And I demand of you that any facts contributing to that end shall be imparted to me as soon as discovered, and that a warrant be sworn out for the arrest of the guilty person as soon as his identity is positively established! This is all to-day, gentlemen!"

It was the forcible advice of the man ac-

customed to using force as the means to an end, and who liked neither the aspect of the case nor the manifest exceptions to his interference and observations.

"There is nothing to be gained by pressing the matter at this time," he said, grimly, after he and Detective Keene had withdrawn. "Alvord has stood top notch with those men for many years. I have great faith in your Boston Chief, however, and if the books presently show——" He did not finish the sentence, but the expression on Captain McClusky's face was a sufficient conclusion.

Sheridan Keene laughed, and they parted at the first corner.

"Shall I see you again before you return to Boston?" asked Captain McClusky, as they shook hands.

"Yes," said Keene, quickly; "I shall not return to-night."

"Drop in on me to-morrow, then."

"Thank you! Very likely I will."

It was nearly four o'clock when they parted, and his talk with Captain McClusky, together with the interview he had heard in the bank, had given Sheridan Keene a possible clue upon which to begin active work; and which, moreover, was well in accord with the deductions and suspicions of Chief Watts. It was the fact that Alvord had not been in town that day, but had had business at his home in Mount Vernon.

Though he said nothing of it to the New York Chief, Detective Keene already had resolved to make a move upon his own judgment, as advised by Chief Watts, and to visit Mount Vernon in person.

"If Alvord is at home, and will receive me," he reasoned; "I easily can invent some occasion for an interview. If he is not at home—well, well! if he is not at home, it will come down to finding out where he is, and the man-hunt will begin!"

"But I'll not figure upon that prematurely," he wisely decided. "I'll give Alvord the benefit of a doubt while the ghost of a doubt remains."

It was six o'clock when he reached Mount Vernon, and darkness had fallen. He did not proceed at once to the Alvord residence, but

after waiting till his train went on, he accosted the station agent.

"Pardon!" he said, courteously. "Have you noticed whether Mr. Alvord came out on one of the earlier trains? Or have you seen him since morning?"

The agent stopped short and laughed, curiously.

"I say, sir!" he exclaimed. "You are the second man who has asked me that sort of a question since noon to-day."

"That so?" said Keene, pleasantly. "Who was the other?"

"Nobody I knew, sir," said the agent, who was favorably impressed with his questioner's agreeable manner. "He was a solidly-built man, with short gray hair and small eyes."

"Smooth face?"

"Yes, and rather red."

"Wear a big diamond?"

"I can't say about that. He had his top-coat buttoned."

"Was he alone?"

"So far as I know, sir. He came down here in a carriage, and went away in it."

"Didn't remain long, eh?"

"Only to ask if I'd seen Alvord leave town. But I haven't laid eyes on him to-day, sir. Excuse me! Here's an in-bound train!"

"The mystery deepens," said Keene to himself, as he left the station. "It's ten to one that was the face I found so noticeable this morning in the gallery of the Stock Exchange! I think, Mr. Alvord, I'll begin in earnest to look you up!"

That the man with small eyes had been to the Alvord residence in search of the latter seemed highly probable; and equally so that he had not found him, else he would have had no occasion to make inquiries at the station.

Yet Sheridan Keene was not to be turned from his original project by the failure of another. He inquired the way of a drug clerk, and just before seven o'clock he rang the bell at the front door of the fine Alvord residence on Chestnut Hill.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. ALVORD TAKES A DRIVE.

Detective Keene's summons was answered by a lady, evidently not a servant, and whom

Keene at once decided to be Mrs. Alvord, a circumstance which also struck him as being suspicious. Yet he raised his hat and said, politely:

"I wish to see Mr. Alvord, if you please, madam."

"Mr. Alvord is not at home, sir," was the reply.

"Not at home to callers, perhaps, but——"

"Not at home, I said, sir!"

"Pardon!" bowed Keene, half-smiling. "I thought, if it were known I had just come out from the bank, that he perhaps would see me, if only for a moment."

At this mention of the bank, the woman's eyes flashed, and her frown deepened, perceptibly.

"How can he see you when he is not here?" she demanded, sharply.

"If you expect him soon, I might wait," suggested Keene, with pacific blandness.

"What is your business with him, young man?"

"I wish to learn if he has the address of one of the bank's clerks, madam, who is absent on a short vacation. That is all."

"Well, if that is all, sir, I will so inform Mr. Alvord when he returns, and he will inform the bank officers, if possible, in the morning. Good-evening, sir."

With which, and a haughty nod, the speaker quickly closed the door.

Sheridan Keene smiled oddly, and remained standing in the vestibule. His detective instinct now was deeply stirred.

"Make a woman angry," he reasoned, "and she will sometimes give her secrets away."

He waited about a minute, then again rang the bell.

It was answered by the same woman. She turned quite pale for a moment, then a deep flush of passionate resentment imbued her cheeks.

"You again!" she exclaimed, sharply. "What do you want now?"

"It is very necessary, madam," Keene replied, with unruffled placidity "that the clerk's address should be learned to-night, if possible. If you will kindly tell me where I can find Mr. Alvord I will——"

"I cannot tell you, sir! Mr. Alvord does not always state where he is going, nor did he

when he departed. Your persistence is annoying, sir! Please do not ring again, for the bell will not be answered!"

"Thank you, madam, for——" but the door was quite violently closed before Detective Keene could express his obligations.

He now decided that nothing would be gained by further persistence. He could not force himself into the house, neither would it be well to enter surreptitiously. He left the vestibule and crossed the driveway to look the dwelling over, however; but a few rooms only were lighted, and his observations were repaid by nothing of moment.

As he was about to depart, he suddenly heard from the direction of the stable the sound of horses' hoofs on a wooden floor, as the animals were led across it. That a pair were out of stall at the same time was significant.

"A hitch out!" thought Keene, with a start. "The carriage may be going for some one—possibly Alvord himself. Yet I now would lay odds against that! I'll take a turn out there."

The large doors of the stable were open when he approached, and the entrance was well lighted by two large lanterns. A man, evidently the coachman, stood near the door, and was drawing on his gloves. In the semi-darkness farther back, two grooms were unhurriedly hitching a pair of well-mated thoroughbreds to a stylish covered carriage. Everything about the place indicated the lavish taste of the owner.

Sheridan Keene approached the coachman, who gave him a doubtful look, then flashed a quick glance in the direction of the carriage.

"I am seeking Mr. Alvord," said Keene, in his agreeable way. "Do you know where I can find him?"

"Sure, sir, gintlemin looking for Mr. Alvord gin'rally go to the house, not the stable," the man replied, dryly.

Sheridan Keene was too wise to offend with a retort.

"I have been to the house," he replied, "but Mrs. Alvord doesn't know where he is."

"Faith, sir, if his wife doesn't know, his coachman's not likely to! Mr. Alvord doesn't

spend much of his leisure in the stable. Toss a heavy robe on the box there, Jerry!"

That this fellow had a goodly share of native artfulness and wit Sheridan Keene quickly had discerned, yet he did not anticipate the full degree of his cunning. He drew nearer, and said with some little show of authority:

"It is quite necessary that I find Mr. Alvord, my man! Are you about going after him?"

The Irishman swung round and surveyed him with a curious grin.

"Sure, I'm not, sir!" he said, pointedly, with a quick nod. "Nothing like it, indade! But you'd better be after going from here, sir, or like as not I'll turn the dog on ye."

"If you do you'll have him to bury!" said Keene, curtly.

"Stand away there, now, or I'll be running over them toes o' ye and bruise 'em. Look out here, Jerry!"

With which the coachman strode towards the rear of the stable, passing the groom on the way, and saying a word or two aside. The groom instantly hurried to the stable door.

Already vaguely suspicious, Sheridan Keene drew to one side to let the vehicle pass out.

The coachman mounted his box, adjusted his robe, and received the reins from the hands of the second groom. Then he gave the restless animals a word, and they clattered forth from the stable with a speed that caught Sheridan Keene unprepared. He sprang back to avoid the wheels.

Yet, even as he did so, the light from one of the lanterns flashed through the closed windows of the passing carriage, and revealed to his startled gaze the figures and faces of two men within.

One was Cornelius L. Alvord, Jr!

The other was the man of the Stock Exchange gallery.

With a half-suppressed cry, Keene darted in pursuit of the carriage, now a rod away and whirling furiously down the driveway. As he passed the groom in the stable door the fellow thrust out his foot. It tripped the detective, who failed in his excitement to observe the movement, and sent him headlong

into the gravel of the driveway as if shot out of a gun.

Sheridan Keene was upon his feet in an instant, and, though he realized that the groom had tripped him, he did not stop, but dashed ahead, following in mad pursuit of the rapidly receding carriage, and fully alive at last to the fact that the deductions and suspicions of Chief Watts were eminently reliable, and that the man-hunt had begun in genuine earnest.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIAT OF JIM GREENLEAF.

The carriage was not Alvord's, but the horses were his. Alvord's horses were invariably noticeable for their style and speed, and his penchant in this direction was fairly a weakness.

The strange carriage, drawn by a pair of ordinary bays, had arrived at the Alvord residence less than a half-hour before the arrival of Detective Keene, and the team had quickly been taken by the groom and removed to the stable.

But not until the solitary occupant of the carriage had alighted and been admitted to the house, after a word to his driver, who immediately departed.

That the visitor's features were well known there, and that he was in close touch with the master of the house, were evident as the servant admitted him without a word, and readily answered the question he asked as he came over the threshold.

"Is Mr. Alvord at dinner or in the library?" he demanded, with a low voice.

"He's in the library, Mr. Greenleaf. You can go in."

"I'll gamble I can go in!" growled Greenleaf, to himself.

He was in ill humor. His search for Alvord had been a long one, and the dangers involved in the delay had been a constant source of irritation. Without removing his top-coat, he proceeded to the library and unceremoniously opened the door. Alvord was seated in an easy chair before the fireplace, his head bowed, his gaze fixed upon the glow of coals.

His indifference indicated that Greenleaf

was expected. He merely raised his eyes, and, with a slight gesture, signed the man to a chair, saying moodily:

"Close the door. I heard from Haskins that you were looking for me, and would come out here. You were here earlier, I am told."

"Yes!" said Greenleaf, shortly, with a resentment only in part concealed. "And if I hadn't heard from Haskins after he met you, I should still be wild goose chasing. Where have you been, and what's wrong?"

"Everything is wrong!" said Alvord, with his resonant voice, quite low and utterly without emotion. "Everything is wrong!"

"Not at the bank?"

"Yes, at the bank!"

"Do you mean—?"

"I mean that the dance is up, and the piper now must be paid!"

It was quietly said, with a calmness like that of a man who, after a long and severe mental strain, relaxes completely, and drops the tension of battle for the apathy of helpless despair.

Jim Greenleaf heard only what the circumstances had led him to anticipate, yet when given the positive assurance his cheeks grew steadily pale, and the perspiration rose on his forehead in tiny drops that glistened visibly in the lamplight.

"Do you mean"—he again began.

But Alvord again interrupted him, now with some irritation.

"You know what I mean, James Greenleaf! Must you see it in black and white, or have it proclaimed from the housetops? You know what I mean when I say that the game is up—hopelessly up!"

Greenleaf frowned darkly, but the fiery gleam of the crafty eyes under his drawn brows rivaled that of the stone in his shirt front.

"Can nothing be done?" he demanded.

"No, nothing."

"Is the exposure imminent?"

"Yes, very!"

"The truth isn't already known, is it?"

"I cannot say how much is known. I have not been to the bank to-day."

"Are you taking no steps to avert the disaster?" asked Greenleaf, angrily.

"What's the use?" Alvord rejoined, in tones of somber moodiness. "The disaster cannot be averted. I tell you again, the game is up!"

Greenleaf's voice fell lower, and his manner, rather than perturbed and anxious, became desperate and threatening. He started up from his chair, with his hands clenched and his sturdy figure shaken with suppressed feeling.

"The game is up, eh?" he said, vehemently. "Well, what do you propose doing, in that case?"

Alvord raised his heavy eyes to the man's pale face, knowing well by what apprehensions he was moved.

"I haven't decided yet, Greenleaf," he replied, indifferently.

"Then, by heaven, I'll decide for you!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean what I say! I mean that you must leave the country; that you must evade arrest; that not a moment shall be lost——"

"Oh, sit down!" exclaimed Alvord, sharply. "Your excitement wears me. I don't know that my interests will best be served by escape and flight. What use to exile myself from——"

"Exile yourself from nothing!" interrupted Greenleaf, with suppressed passion. "Your exile should be of secondary consideration, now that the worst has come! The interests of others must not be sacrificed, even if you are willing to throw up your hands and go to the wall."

"Oh, that's it, is it?"

"Aye, that is it!" Greenleaf forcibly continued. "Your exposure may involve that of others, in event of your arrest. You have been a game sport, Alvord, and have cut a swell figure on the race track and at Saratoga——"

"I wish I had never met you at Saratoga, nor laid eyes on you or any of yours!" cried Alvord, bitterly.

"That's neither here nor there!" retorted Greenleaf. "You were ready enough to take up with me and mine, and to make through me your plunges there and in Wall street. Now that the game is up, mark me! I propose to stand between you and a betrayal of others, as I have stood between you and earlier exposure. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it, Alvord! You must leave the country!"

"If I decline?"

"If you decline, I will expose facts in your career——"

"Peace!" Alvord now interposed, with a deprecatory sweep of his powerful arm. "You can expose nothing that will not speedily be exposed without you. Don't imagine

that you can intimidate me with your threats."

"I want to know what you intend doing," Greenleaf still persisted, in threatening tones. "I am not here without a purpose, and I'll not be put aside. I want to know what you mean to do at this crisis of affairs, and know I will!"

"I don't see how you can, Greenleaf, since I myself do not know," Alvord answered shortly. "I only know at present that I shall remain under cover till I have decided what is best to be done."

"But you cannot safely remain here," protested Greenleaf, forcibly. "It's ten to one a warrant may be issued for your arrest, and that an officer may be here before morning in search of you."

"Alas! that's true enough," Alvord dismaly admitted.

"You must at least leave here until your own plans are laid—and mine!" the go-between zealously argued. "The interests of others require it. Your arrest must be prevented, your escape insured. I will not answer for your life, even, if it becomes known that——"

"Peace! Don't threaten my life. I have ceased to value it."

"But others have lives that are valued, and reputations, as well!" cried Greenleaf, sternly. "Once for all, you cannot remain here. You are courting arrest by such indifference. An officer even now may be on his way here. If you were arrested to-night, the devil himself couldn't avert the downfall of——"

It was at this moment that Sheridan Keene rang at the front door.

The sound of the bell, following so closely upon Greenleaf's words, seemed to affect Alvord like an electric shock. He sprang to his feet, pale and trembling, and listened intently for a moment; then he hurried to the library door, having heard a step in the hall.

"Answer the bell!" he cried, softly, to the woman who met his startled gaze. "Answer it yourself!"

She hastened through the hall and opened the door, while the defaulter stood listening, his strained ears taking in all that was said. When mention was made of the bank, he shuddered violently, and peered between the door and the casing in an attempt to identify the clerk.

"It's a lie!" he muttered, angrily. "That man is a stranger! He does not come from the bank!"

"More likely an officer, a detective!" said Greenleaf, with intense virulence. "If he has a warrant——"

"Warrant or not, I'll not be taken yet!" cried Alvord, passionately.

Perhaps the sudden imminence of this fate, or the words of Greenleaf, or the natural aversion one would feel to being arrested in one's own home—possibly all of these combined, shaped Alvord's immediate conduct. He wheeled sharply to Greenleaf and said, as the front door was closed:

"What's to be done?"

"Leave here by all means!" cried Greenleaf, instantly.

"But where can I go?"

"With me! My carriage is in the stable! I'll conceal you in New York for a time, then in Boston! From there you must leave the country before any arrest can be effected, or your——"

The bell again.

"Answer it!" cried Alvord, with a wave of his hand towards the woman in the hall.

Then he swung round and caught Greenleaf's arm.

"This way!" he muttered, excitedly. "By the rear door! Haste! hasten!"

They passed out through the gloom of the night, and reached the stable five minutes in advance of Sheridan Keene.

"Hitch my horses in place of those!" Alvord hurriedly commanded, addressing one of the grooms. "If a man comes out here in search of me, I wish to evade him!"

"Sure, sir, leave that to me!" cried the groom. "Get into the carriage, both of you! Now, faith, let the man come!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SECOND MOVE BY DETECTIVE KEENE.

Sheridan Keene did not overtake the carriage containing Alvord and James Greenleaf. The fall to which he had been so treacherously treated gave the detective a considerable handicap, and, though he maintained a sharp pursuit for a time, he finally was distanced, and the rapidly-driven carriage was swallowed up in the darkness.

Cooling down from his temporary excitement, Keene realized that he could have done nothing more than to have asked a few questions, which Alvord could have answered or not, as he pleased. He could not have detained the man. There was no warrant out for his arrest. Suspicion of him was not even general. No officer on the force could legally detain him.

He decided to turn the episode merely to his own use. He now suspected, assuming Alvord to be guilty of felony, that he had been plunging heavily in stocks, possibly concealing the fact by making his deals through a third party or parties. It might be, too, that through speculation and gambling Al-

vord had indiscreetly put himself in the power of some clique of crooks or gamblers, by whom he had been driven deeper and deeper in vice.

This last seemed very probable to Sheridan Keene, who did not fancy the looks and actions of Greenleaf; and he resolved that, if such a gang of crooks were involved, they should meet their just deserts along with the defaulter. Yet they were not ordinary crooks and ruffians, of that he felt certain. Alvord was not a man to associate with these. More likely they were the polished scoundrels whose operations are the most difficult to detect.

Communicating with Chief Watts by the long distance telephone next morning, and imparting his discoveries and his own views of the case, Detective Keene was advised to remain in New York and continue his investigations.

This he did, making during Saturday and Monday a vigorous search for Greenleaf in Wall street and about the offices of the Stock Exchange. If he could find the latter, he through him could locate and keep track of Alvord until such action had been taken by the bank as would establish his guilt and warrant his arrest.

He ventured but few inquiries, however, lest an alarm should be given Alvord and his confederates. His efforts were not rewarded by a sign, even, of Greenleaf or the man with whom Keene had seen him talking the Friday morning before.

Meantime investigations at the bank were continued, the secret movements of the police were maintained, and the missing bank clerk still remained in the background, yet a much-desired person. By a stroke of good luck, and a result also of constant vigilance, it fell upon Detective Keene to locate the missing man.

Seeing nothing to be gained by a longer stay in New York, Keene left for Boston on Tuesday morning by the way of Springfield. As his train entered the latter station the New York west-bound train was nearly due. Looking from the window of his car, and giving him an irrepressible start of surprise, Keene beheld among the people waiting on the station platform a young man answering the description of the missing clerk.

Quickly leaving his car, Keene caught the arm of a newsboy outside, and, slipping a half dollar into his hand, said, hurriedly:

"Run out yonder, my lad, and call out, 'Archer! Archer!' as if to some playmate. Then run away about your business."

The lad's native shrewdness was sharpened by the coin, and he darted off to obey. In a moment, his shrill voice rang through the

station, and at the sound of the name Sheridan Keene saw the man he suspected wheel sharply about, and stare perplexedly in all directions.

The evidence was sufficient. The man was undoubtedly Archer. And Sheridan Keene followed him aboard the west-bound train, and took a seat behind him in the smoking-car.

At Bridgeport the detective telephoned to Captain McClusky to meet him on the arrival of the train at the Grand Central station, intimating the occasion.

As they left the train Detective Keene drew to the young man's side and asked, pleasantly:

"Isn't this Mr. Archer?"

"Why, yes," was the reply; "that's my name. But you have the best of me, sir."

"Haven't I seen you in the First National Bank?"

"I am employed there, sir."

"Been on a vacation?"

"A short one, merely a visit to friends in Boston and Springfield. But why do you ask me, sir?"

"I'll tell you presently," smiled Sheridan Keene, as they came down from the car. "Come out this way, if you please. The fact is, Mr. Archer—ah, here is a gentleman waiting for us! Mr. Archer, have you ever met Captain McClusky, of the police department? Permit me, Captain, to present Mr. Archer, of the First National Bank."

The head of the New York police flashed a curious glance at the Boston detective, in which wonderment and admiration were mingled. He did not quite understand him, or how this move had been accomplished.

As for Archer, he turned pale for a moment, then flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Captain McClusky!" he gasped, instantly grasping the significance of what had transpired. "Good heavens! gentlemen, there is nothing wrong at the bank, is there?"

"Do you know of anything?" demanded Captain McClusky, with a searching scrutiny of the young man's face.

"Indeed, I do not!" cried Archer, fervently. "I am just returning to resume my duties there to-morrow morning."

"We will go there now, instead!" said Captain McClusky, with austerity. "I now will see that this matter no longer hangs fire."

He already felt convinced of Archer's innocence, as did Detective Keene, and, on their arrival at the bank, their convictions were corroborated. The examination of the books had now revealed unquestionably that Alvord himself was the defaulter, an embezzler to the amount of nearly seven hundred thousand dollars.

There was a warm time there that Tuesday afternoon. Though no warrant for Alvord was immediately sworn out, a step which Captain McClusky finally was compelled to enforce, the news of the enormous felony was given to the world, and the community thrilled through and through by the startling disclosure.

Then it was that Wall street shivered and bankers shuddered. Then it was that the financial world trembled and stared aghast. Then it was that the pulse of police and sheriff was set beating faster, and that the outraged institution came forth with the offer of a great reward for the defaulter's arrest.

And then it was that there flashed to every police department of the civilized world that circular of warning:

"Look for Cornelius L. Alvord, Jr., 52 years old; looks younger; 6 feet tall, weighs 280 pounds; brown hair, cut closely, and mixed with a little gray; mustache light brown, rather thin; dresses slouchily; round face; blue eyes; smokes incessantly."

CHAPTER VII.

STRIKING THE TRAIL.

Sheridan Keene returned to Boston that Tuesday night, via the Fall River Line. Since the exoneration of Archer, and the general publication of the great loss suffered by the bank, he was firmly resolved not only to capture Alvord, but also to run down the gang of speculators, gamblers, or whatever their nefarious vocation, through whom he now felt certain the defaulter had been operating, and by whom he very likely had been most outrageously fleeced.

Who these parties were, and how many the gang comprised, he could only conjecture; but that the two men of the Stock Exchange gallery were of the number, and that Alvord was still in active relations with them, seemed reasonably certain judging by the incident in Alvord's stable. Their past relations, however, as well as their present designs, were mysteries yet to be solved.

At nine o'clock Wednesday morning, the 24th, Detective Keene reported at the Boston headquarters, where he was received by Chief Watts with a hearty greeting and a word of commendation for the work already done. For more than an hour they remained in private consultation, until Keene had officially reported all of his discoveries, and the Chief had fully grasped the details of the case as far as it had progressed.

Here again the ready faculty for analysis

and discernment possessed by Chief Watts was apparent in his immediate deductions.

"It is very evident," he said, when Keene had concluded; "that there is more knavery than mystery in this affair."

"Do you think so, Chief?"

"I do, indeed. I think Alvord has been to some extent at least a tool in the hands of others. It is my firm belief that, if the others can be located, Alvord also will be found."

"But why should he still cleave to them, Chief Watts?" inquired Keene, doubtfully. "He must know that his crime is discovered, his guilt established, and that his only alternative is surrender or flight."

"That is true."

"Why, then, should he cleave to these knaves who, perhaps, have helped ruin him?"

Chief Watts laughed in a quiet way.

"The boot is probably on the other leg!" he said, shortly. "The rascals are more likely holding fast to him. It is odds that they received some intimation of Alvord's impending exposure and, realizing how seriously they are involved in his downfall, they no doubt are making strenuous efforts to prevent his capture, fearing it may result in a full confession on his part, and in their own exposure and incrimination."

"By Jove, I believe that theory is correct, Chief Watts!" exclaimed Sheridan Keene with enthusiasm.

"Hence I repeat, locate these scamps and you will probably locate Alvord. He no doubt has been speculating heavily, if not gambling on the racetrack and elsewhere. In a case where hundreds of thousands have been stolen and thrown into the maelstrom of Wall street, who can say how many respectable brokers are more or less involved and indirectly culpable? Alvord's permanent disappearance and silence may be vitally necessary to the reputation of far more men than appears upon the surface."

"You are right, Chief Watts."

"Now, then, as to the line of work," Chief Watts earnestly continued. "You have the names of some of Alvord's friends here in Boston. I want you to look them up this morning, and see if from them any information can be gathered."

"I will set about it at once."

"During the day you will also make it a point to visit the hotels. You are familiar with the features of at least one or two of the gang in relations with Alvord. It is barely possible that you may run across one of these. If you should, you will know what to do."

"Well, rather," said Keene, smiling significantly.

"That is all now," nodded Chief Watts,

approvingly. "Whether you succeed in making any discoveries during the day or not, report to me again to-morrow morning. I then may have further instructions to give you. That is all."

Detective Keene immediately arose and took his hat.

"Good-morning, Chief," he said, simply.

"Good-morning—and good luck!"

Starting with the clues already secured, and following the lines laid out by the chief, Sheridan Keene devoted a greater part of the day to interviews with those acquaintances of Alvord whose names had been given him when in New York. His inquiries resulted in nothing of importance, however, as all of these friends of Alvord, who now had heard of the great defalcation, protested entire ignorance as to his movements.

After leaving the residence of one of these, and as he was returning down Boylston street late in the afternoon, a sharp shower drove Keene to seek shelter. He was near the Hotel Touraine and there he found cover.

The magnificent office and rotunda of this fine hotel was thronged with people, many of them prominent business men, bankers and brokers, who had dropped in there on their way up town. Detective Keene had scarcely entered when his attention was attracted by a group of men near the broad fireplace, two of whom he recognized as large operators in State street. Their conversation was animated, and that its subject was Alvord and his great defalcation led the detective to draw nearer, being more particularly interested in the observations made by one of these men.

"Oh, I am by no means sure, Brooks, that Alvord has left the country, despite you are so certain!" he exclaimed, as Keene was approaching. "I have reason to believe quite the contrary."

"Perhaps you are in touch with him, Mr. Lawton, and are carrying some of his securities!" was the reply, which brought a laugh from the group. "I don't envy you in that case."

"Well, that is not the case," Lawton rejoined, coloring slightly. "But I met a man here less than half an hour ago who said he had seen Alvord this very day."

"I guess his sight was dazzled by the five thousand dollars' reward offered for seeing him," was the ironical reply. "Why didn't he nail him?"

"Oh, I'm not so sure he was wrong! He claimed to know Alvord well by sight, and evidently had no doubts about the fact."

"Did he say where he saw him?"

"Right here, gentlemen! In this very

room!" declared Lawton, ignoring the amusement his statements were creating. "The man was no fool, moreover, despite that you think his claim was nonsense."

"Possibly not!" laughed Brooks, incredulously. "A fool was Alvord at all events, if he ventured showing himself in the Hotel Touraine. The very idea is absurd."

Yet this same idea, and the assurance with which Lawton had spoken, led Detective Keene to await an opportunity, and then draw Lawton away from the group.

"I overheard what you said about a man who had seen Alvord," he explained, when they were alone. "I am Detective Keene, of the Boston force."

"Oh, yes! I know your face now!" Lawton pleasantly interposed. "I have seen you in company with members of the bank squad. What can I do for you?"

"Tell me precisely what the man said about seeing Alvord, if you please."

"If you overheard me, you already know," laughed Lawton. "He merely said that he saw him here in this office."

"Did he say when?"

"To-day."

"That doesn't seem very probable, yet it may be worth looking into. Are you acquainted with the man who states this?"

"Only casually, Mr. Keene."

"Do you know his name, and where he can be found?"

"I know only that his name is Alexander. He is a Western man, and I think he is a commercial traveler. I imagine he is at one of the hotels."

"Ah, yes! Thank you."

Though the story did, indeed, seem rather improbable, the zest with which Detective Keene followed up a clue, even if a visionary one, was manifest next morning. About nine o'clock he entered the office of Chief Watts, in a rather hurried and eager way, saying immediately:

"Pardon the interruption, Chief! I have a man outside, with whom I wish you to have a word. He says he has information about Alvord, but seems rather averse to disclosing it to me. Perhaps you can secure it."

Chief Watts, who was very busy at his desk, looked rather doubtful.

"Since a reward was offered for his apprehension, there are hundreds who imagine they have seen Alvord. There'll soon be as many clues as Alvord has stolen dollars," he said, dryly. "However, bring him in here!"

And the portly Chief Inspector threw himself back in his large oak chair, and impatiently waited the brief interval till Detective Keene ushered into the room a rather pre-

possessing, well-dressed man, and forthwith closed the office door.

"Chief Watts?"

"I am Chief Watts, sir," bowed the latter, with a wave of his hand. "Take a chair. What's your business with me?"

And now the Chief's eyes suddenly met those of the stranger, with that steady, penetrating scrutiny which somehow irresistibly confuses one not well armed with a consciousness of his own honesty.

But the stranger betrayed no disturbance.

"I understand, sir," he replied, "that a reward of five thousand dollars is offered for information leading to the discovery and arrest of Alvord, the New York defaulter. Now, if I felt sure——"

"One moment, please!" Chief Watts blandly interposed, yet in a semi-decisive way. "The reward will be all right, providing you have any information concerning him."

The stranger demurred for a moment, then replied:

"I know Alvord by sight, and I think I saw him yesterday at the Hotel Touraine."

"At the Touraine, eh? At what time and what was he doing?"

"I saw him once in the morning, sir, lounging back of a newspaper he was reading; and later I saw him reading a book."

"Do you mean that he was in the public reading-room?"

"Not in the library, Chief, but in the office," explained the stranger, meaning to distinguish between the general office, and the commodious and splendid library, which the magnificent Hotel Touraine provides for its patrons. "He was smoking most of the time I remained watching him."

"What's your name, sir?"

"Henry M. Alexander."

"Resident here?"

"My home is in Denver, Colorado. I am a traveling man."

"Have you ever had any dealings with Alvord?"

"None, sir."

"Then you don't know him personally?"

"Not as an acquaintance."

"At what hour did you last see this man at the Touraine?"

"Not far from one o'clock, sir. I have not seen him since then."

"Why didn't you inform an officer of your discovery?"

"Because I had read that no warrant had been issued for Alvord's arrest."

"I see! I see! Did you mention your suspicion to anybody at the Touraine?"

"No, sir; I did not."

"Can you state anything further in the movements of the man you think was Alvord?"

"No, sir. I have not seen him since yesterday."

"Then, that is all just now, Mr. Alexander. You leave me your address here in Boston. I will look this matter up, and perhaps communicate with you later."

"If it results in anything——"

"In that case I surely will, sir."

Chief Watts was evidently impatient to terminate the interview, and not until after Alexander's departure did he express his views to Sheridan Keene.

"While I am not much inclined to credit this story, it is worth investigating," he gravely observed.

"Shall I undertake it, Chief?"

"I want you here. I will send Inspector Morrissey up there, and Douglass. It is hardly probable that Alvord has been hanging about in public, as asserted," Chief Watts slowly added, with a thoughtful knitting of his brows; "yet certain reports that I have read are leading me to lay the foundation of a theory which, it is barely possible, will not prove wholly erroneous. Yes, I'll look into it!"

The expression which had settled on his grave, forceful face suggested more even than his words. He arose quite abruptly, and going personally to the general office he dispatched the inspectors mentioned upon an inquiry to the Touraine, as well as the intermediate hotels.

Later in the day he called Sheridan Keene to his office, and gave him his further instructions.

"I begin to think after all, that there may be some truth in Alexander's story," he gravely observed, signing Keene to a chair. "Inspector Morrissey tells me he learns that a man answering in a general way Alvord's description was seen in the office of the Touraine, and that he now cannot be located. I want a man to come over here who is thoroughly familiar with Alvord's personal appearance, and I then will extend my inquiries. I have communicated with Captain McClusky by telephone, and he will send on Detective Tinker, of the central office."

"At once, Chief?"

"He is now on the way. He will arrive at the Southern Union at nine this evening. I want you to meet him there, and bring him here at once."

"I will do so."

"After I hear what he has to say of the developments in New York, we will visit the Touraine. If we discover positively that Alvord has been in Boston, there is a matter

upon which I want you to quickly get to work."

"What is that, Chief Watts?"

"A search after the man you saw with him in Mount Vernon. Very possibly an attempt is being made to conceal Alvord in this city, and that this man is here and at the bottom of it. You know him by sight. To-morrow morning a vigorous search for him must be begun, providing we are assured that Alvord has been here. Detective Tinker will enable us to settle that."

"I think so, Chief."

"Do not fail to meet him when he arrives."

"Surely not!" Keene exclaimed, rising. "And I will bring him here at once."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEDUCTIONS OF CHIEF INSPECTOR WATTS.

It was nearly ten o'clock that Thursday evening, a dull, damp, disagreeable night. The multitude of people usually thronging the chief thoroughfares at this hour was thinned down by the chill and the dampness. The electric lights glowed with a halo through the mist and fog, and the atmosphere wore a yellow haze.

Yet there were more carriages than usual rattling and rumbling over the city pavements. It is an ill wind, indeed, that blows a cabman no good. Their vehicles stood in long lines before the brilliant entrances to the theatres, and fairly blocked the crossings in the immediate neighborhood of the railway stations.

One of these left the Southern Union soon after half-past nine, and, at a rate of speed indicating matters of serious moment, tore through Summer and Winter streets, and thence to Pemberton Square.

Before quarter of ten it had drawn up under the frown of the new Court House and the grim headquarters building, and at the office of the Inspector of Police.

Without waiting the service of the cabman, Sheridan Keene opened the carriage door and sprang down to the sidewalk, closely followed by a quick, energetic man in civilian dress and a top-coat.

This man was the detective sent from the central office in New York by Captain George McClusky.

"Wait here, driver! We shall want you presently!" Sheridan Keene said, sharply. "This way, Detective Tinker. We shall find Chief Watts awaiting us."

And he led the way down the stairs, and straight through the corridor to the Chief's private office.

As Detective Keene had predicted, they

found Chief Watts at his desk and alone, where he had been for hour after hour, his mind concentrated upon operations already ably directed, and upon the greater and more delicate work he instinctively felt was before him. Yet no sign of weariness was in his resolute face, and the eyes were bright that greeted with an eager smile the New York officer.

"How are you, Detective Tinker!" he exclaimed, springing up to warmly shake the latter's hand.

"How are you, Chief Watts? I'm glad to see you."

"Thanks! And I am glad that you're here. Take this chair. Stay, Detective Keene! Did you bid the cabman wait?"

"Yes, Chief."

"Remain with us. We'll presently visit the Touraine. I first want a brief talk with Detective Tinker. Close both doors, please."

For the first time since the inception of this great case, and the inauguration of a search which, if successful, would save the expenditure of thousands of dollars, the voice and manner of Chief Watts betrayed momentary nervousness and excitement.

He dropped back in his chair, resting both hands upon the arm nearest the seat occupied by Detective Tinker, and his face assumed a steady, studious expression.

"We'll presently visit the Touraine, Detective Tinker," he repeated. "No doubt, with your knowledge of Alvord, we can satisfy ourselves as to whether he has really been there."

"I think so, Chief."

"There is no special haste about it, however, for I am already certain that he is not there now. So, before we leave, I would like to ask you something about Alvord's movements in New York, if you have no objection."

"Surely not, Chief Watts!" said Detective Tinker, heartily.

"By the way, Detective Tinker," asked Inspector Watts, "do you know just when it is safe to assume that Alvord was last seen in New York city?"

The searching scrutiny to which he was being subjected, as if back of it existed some purpose not easily surmised, led Detective Tinker to hesitate for a moment, and weigh his answer with caution.

"Well, Chief Watts," he presently rejoined, "it is reasonably certain that Alvord was seen some day last week, subsequent to his leaving the bank for the last time. He called upon Lawyer Jacob F. Miller, and retained him as counsel."

"Does Miller state the precise day?"

"I cannot say. He states, however, that

Alvord called at his law office to consult him upon this matter, and that he was engaged as counsel."

"Do you know if Alvord was seen at his home after Friday evening last?"

It was then that Detective Keene had seen him in the carriage with Greenleaf; but Chief Watts now was seeking information, not imparting it.

"It is not positively established when he was last at home. He has always been a lavish entertainer, and it is known that invitations were out for a large dinner party on the 17th. But on that very day the invitations were recalled by a messenger, and that night the house was closed and in darkness. Further inquiry has revealed that Alvord was next day reported to be ill, to friends that called."

"Were any of the callers admitted to the house, or did any of them see Alvord?"

"None have been found," replied Detective Tinker, shaking his head. "It was said by some of the neighbors, after the defalcation was published, that he had left town on the 17th, and embarked for South America. But this is not corroborated."

"Nor will it be, to my way of thinking," said Chief Watts, shortly.

"Since Tuesday afternoon detectives have been watching the Alvord residence," continued Detective Tinker. "It was thought at one time that evening that Alvord had returned home."

"Why so?"

"A closed carriage was driven rapidly up to the house, and a man of Alvord's bulky figure was seen to hurriedly enter the vestibule. The outside doors, which had been closed and secured all day, were opened for him before the carriage had fairly come to a stop."

"Indicating that the man was expected!"

"Precisely, Chief!" nodded Detective Tinker. "Immediately after, several of the rooms were lighted, and there appeared to be some excitement in the house. Then the lights suddenly went out, about a quarter-hour later."

"Did the man who had entered come alone in the carriage?"

"No, he did not. He had two companions, a man and a woman. After he was safely in the house, the carriage was driven around the square and back to the Alvord door. It waited barely a few seconds, then started rapidly away and did not return."

"Nor take away the passenger who had entered the house?"

"No, sir."

"Were there any inquiries made at the house by the detectives?"

"An attempt was made, but repeated rings at the door-bell brought no response."

"And the identity of the man who entered?"

"Cannot be established."

"Nor that of his companions in the carriage?"

"Neither, Chief," replied Detective Tinker; yet both Chief Watts and Detective Keene decided the man was Greenleaf, upon some mission for Alvord.

"Where is Mrs. Alvord?"

"She was at home until this morning, when she came into New York with the expressed intention of remaining. The Pinkerton men make it rather unpleasant for her at Mount Vernon."

"Do you know if she and Lawyer Miller have had any conferences?"

"Several. Both Miller, and his partner, Mr. Decker, were at the Alvord house all of Tuesday night. Decker and Mrs. Alvord went into town from Pelham the following morning, and Miller went from Mt. Vernon on the eight-thirty train."

"Can't the detectives learn anything from the servants?"

"The coachman, Barney, is about the only one accessible, and he's as close-mouthed as an oyster. He did drop the remark, though, that Alvord had no idea of running away."

"Ah, is that so?"

"The opinion about there, and among Alvord's friends, in fact, is that he is not far away and can be reached if wanted."

"Yes?"

"And there is no doubt in my mind that the bank officers are making strenuous efforts to secure a restitution," added Detective Tinker.

"Do you know whether any considerable sum has been located, which the bank people are making these efforts to recover?"

"I know only what comes from the office of Peabody, Baker & Peabody, who have entire charge of the civil and criminal action against Alvord."

"And what do they say?"

"That while no inventory has been made, a rough estimate of Alvord's personal effects, household goods and jewelry, would be about \$200,000. It is likely to fall short of that, however."

"Do they make no statement concerning Alvord's continued absence?" demanded Chief Watts, with a slight frown betraying his censorious sentiments."

"They deny having any knowledge of his whereabouts, and claim that, if they could locate him, his arrest should immediately follow. I think they are perfectly honest in this

statement, though one of them is inclined to believe that Alvord has left the country."

"And that is the belief of a lawyer, a man presumably an analyst and logician!" exclaimed Chief Watts, in accents so derisive that Sheridan Keene, who well knew the characteristics of the speaker, instantly realized that he was about to state his own belief.

And the younger detective, always ready to profit from observation of the methods of his able superior, quietly drew nearer.

"I am rather surprised at that!" Chief Watts continued, drawing up his portly figure in his chair. "Why, Detective Tinker, there is absolutely no evidence whatever that Alvord has left the country, save alone that of his sudden disappearance and its analogy to like cases. But hundreds of men temporarily disappear in the course of a year, yet not necessarily from the country."

"That is true, Chief Watts," admitted the detective.

"On the other hand, gentlemen, there is the strongest kind of evidence that Alvord not only has not resorted to distant flight, but that he really has had no intention of so doing," Chief Watts warmly argued. "In cases of this kind there is one feature that is too generally overlooked, yet its significance is of the greatest consequence."

"What feature is that, Chief?" asked Keene.

"The conduct of the criminal himself, as indicating the probable plans he carries in mind!" Chief Watts declared with emphasis.

"Just review some of the features in the case, and see for yourselves to what they point," he continued, with a flush steadily deepening in his florid cheeks.

"Alvord left the bank on the 18th, and for five days after, until the 23d, when his defalcation was made public, he is reported to have been ill at home. Never mind whether that is true or not! We know that up to the 17th, when his dinner invitations were recalled, he certainly had no plan for immediate departure. It is a hundred to one that, on the 18th, he observed something at the bank which led him to anticipate speedy exposure, and to leave the bank for good."

"By gracious, Chief Watts, I believe you are right!" exclaimed Detective Tinker.

"Now what follows? It doesn't matter just where he was during the next five days. Of one fact we are reasonably sure; that he called upon Lawyer Miller, with whom he discussed his situation, and whom he retained as counsel."

"Yes!"

"Were those the acts of a man seriously contemplating flight from the country?" de-

manded the Chief, with forcible earnestness. "Not at all! Positively the contrary! The embezzler who really intends to abscond, and to flee the country, does not wait to consult an attorney. He consults a shipping list instead! He packs his grip the instant he suspects himself exposed, and takes the first out-bound steamship. Did Alvord do this? Not at all!"

"But, Chief——"

"Wait one moment! Now, again! Why did Alvord consult Lawyer Miller? Was it to learn if there was any way by which he could evade arrest? No! His own common sense would have informed him to the contrary. Was it with a hope of evading prosecution, in event of a partial restitution?"

"Possibly——"

"No, sir. Alvord's expensive living, his expenditures at Saratoga, the evidence of his habit of speculation, all go to show that he has little or nothing to restore. It was not for that that he consulted Miller."

"I guess you are right!"

"Now, again! Did he hope to secure through Miller the assistance of friends? Not at all! No sane man, short in his accounts three-quarters of a million of dollars, would think for an instant of asking the help of friends. It would be absurd, farcical even! He had no such motive!"

"Yet he must have had a motive," cried Detective Tinker, irresistibly moved by the forcible logic with which Chief Watts was depicting the case.

"To be sure he had!" exclaimed the Chief, with a quick nod. "And the most likely one is, that he aimed not only to protect his wife's interest in their personal estate, but also to prepare the way, prior to his arrest, for such operations and advice on the part of his counsel as would be most to the advantage of both his wife and himself after his apprehension.

"Mark my words, gentlemen!" concluded Chief Watts, with augmented feeling as he drew his deductions to a close. "Cornelius L. Alvord, Jr., has had no intention of leaving the country, save that it has been very recently formed. His own acts since the publication of his crime, the testimony of Lawyer Miller, the delay of the bank officers in swearing out a warrant, and their evident desire to effect something yet to be discovered, the frequent conferences between Miller and Mrs. Alvord, the remark of the coachman at Mt. Vernon, the testimony of friends and of persons who are said to have seen Alvord—every particle of this evidence declares on the face of it, not that the defaulter has fled the country, but that he is concealed somewhere within a reasonable

distance of New York, and actuated in delaying arrest by motives best known to his wife, his attorney, and to Alvord himself!"

It was an effective argument, not alone because of astute analysis and logical deductions, but also because of the dramatic force with which the conclusion had been drawn. Although he was not a man easily moved to excitement, Detective John Tinker sprang impulsively to his feet, his face flushed, his eyes flashing.

"By Jove, Watts, you amaze me!" he exclaimed, with an irrepressible outburst of familiarity and frankness. "You're a marvel, and your perception is wonderful!"

"Not so!" cried Chief Watts, rising. "This case has features that speak for themselves, and in no uncertain tones."

"You are right, sir!"

"I am convinced that a soul of truth is contained in my deductions. I am satisfied that Alvord has not fled the country. I firmly believe that the statements of some of these informants are true—and why not, then, that of Henry M. Alexander?"

"In that case, Chief?"

"In that case, Detective Keene, we must move sharper than any gang of friends or confederates by whom Alvord may be surrounded and influenced!" cried Chief Watts, forcibly. "If Alvord has been in Boston, the trail should be hot and our course plain! Come, gentlemen, we will visit the Touraine!"

CHAPTER IX.

BYRON STEERLING, NEW YORK.

Again the cabman's carriage rolled noisily over the pavements of the city streets and through the mists of approaching midnight; and in addition to its former occupants, it now contained the man whose clear foresight and indefatigable efforts were destined to be crowned with a veritable triumph of detective art.

The ride was not a long one, and presently Sheridan Keene leaned from the window and called sharply:

"To the side door, cabbie!"

"All right, sir."

The towering walls of the magnificent new Touraine were already looming up against the dull night sky. Some of its hundred windows were still illumined, despite the late hour, but the greater number were in darkness.

The elaborate office, gorgeous with the frescoes and art work of master-hands, was brilliantly lighted, however, and a warm glow

through the plate windows was shed over sidewalk and street.

The cabman crossed Boylston street and drew his steaming horses down at the curbing opposite the broad Tremont street entrance to the hotel.

"Wait for us!" commanded Sheridan Keene, when he alighted.

Chief Watts and the New York officer immediately followed, and together the three men entered the Touraine.

Turning to the left, the Chief first led the way to the broad inclosure which comprises the business office, and was at once recognized by the night clerk at the desk.

"Good-evening—"

But the Chief checked with a quick glance the mention of his name. A few late loungers were about the office, the library still was lighted and occupied, and a party of ladies and men were in the nearer parlor. The entrance of the three officers, although in civilian dress, had already attracted as much attention as Chief Watts cared to create.

"I understand," nodded the clerk, as they approached nearer the counter. "I can guess what you wish, for I had a talk with Mr. Morrissey this morning."

"I want to establish, if possible, the identity of a man who was here," nodded the Chief. "You evidently know which man I mean."

"Yes, I do."

"Were you on duty at any time while he was here?"

"I was on duty when he arrived. I imagined at the time he came in on one of the New York trains. It was about half-past six."

"Did he register?"

"Yes."

"Show me the name."

The clerk quickly turned the register around, and ran his finger down the page till it reached the signature:

"Byron Steerling, New York."

"Humph!" muttered Chief Watts, then glanced at Detective Tinker. "Do you know Alvord's hand?"

"No, I do not. What's the name?"

"Byron Steerling."

"Very pretty."

"Isn't it? Sounds rather like him! I wish, my friend, that you would give us as precise a description of Mr. Steerling as you are able. This is Detective Tinker, of the New York Central Office, and a man acquainted with Alvord. Cover every point you can recall of this man Steerling; and presently I want you to summon two or three others of your employees who saw him."

"Won't you step inside the office, Chief?"

"I think it will be as well."

Oblivious to the curious gaze of the guests in the rotunda, as well as that of several ladies who had emerged from the nearer parlor and stood in the dining-room corridor, Chief Watts, with habitual dignity, led the way into the inclosure.

The interview there, however, was of comparatively brief duration. With the detailed description given by the several employees, aided by sundry inquiries on his own part, Detective Tinker soon had assured himself that Alvord, the defaulter, and the stranger, who two days previous had registered as Byron Steerling, New York, were one and the same man.

"I am reasonably certain of the fact, Chief Watts," the New York officer declared, as the three men left the Touraine and returned to the waiting carriage. "I am fairly without a doubt that Alvord was at this house no longer ago than yesterday noon."

"I believe so, too!" said Chief Watts, as the carriage wheeled to return to Pemberton Square. "And I now am further satisfied that Alvord still is here in the city, or at least not more remote than one of the suburbs."

"Surely, Chief!" exclaimed Sheridan Keene. "With the publicity given him today, he could not have ventured far without observation, and some informer would have turned up. Five thousand dollars are not to be gathered from every bush."

"Nor every defaulter," laughed Detective Tinker, thus far well satisfied with the success of his hurried journey.

"You are right. Alvord, moreover, is a man of too prominent a type to travel far without attracting attention, and he well knows it," Chief Watts resumed. "He knows, too, that the Boston police are on the watch for him, and what it would cost him to venture in sight of a bluecoat."

"What are your plans, Chief, may I ask?" inquired Detective Tinker.

"To keep our discovery secret and go quietly to work. That is why I cautioned you against betraying at the Touraine the conclusions at which we arrived. I shall impart the facts to my inspectors only."

"A wise step, Chief! But how about Captain McClusky?"

"Naturally, I shall communicate the facts to him, requesting his discretion and assistance," Chief Watts replied. "I shall ask him to instruct you to remain in Boston, pending developments, and to identify Alvord, in event of his arrest."

"He will consent to that, I am sure."

"And to-morrow, Chief Watts?"

"We will take up the search anew. I will, if necessary, press into service every officer on the force. I will have every suburb con-

stantly watched. I will leave no stone unturned, no house within Boston's limits—ah, here we are at headquarters! Will you come in again, Detective Tinker?"

"Well, I hardly know, Chief," the other briefly demurred. "If there is nothing special until morning, I think I'll snatch a wink of sleep. Otherwise, command me."

"No, no; get some rest, by all means," gravely rejoined Chief Watts, with a warm hand-shake. "You already have done us a valuable service, and I thank you. Detective Keene!"

"Yes, Chief!" and the young officer sprang nearer.

"Take our friend under your wing and entertain him royally. I regret, John, that my own duties deprive me of the privilege."

"Not a word, Chief Watts! Don't speak of it."

"I have several letters to write, and then wish to probe this case a little deeper. Hence must bid you both good-night. Report early to-morrow morning, Detective Keene!" he added, significantly.

No later than the very next morning there came reports which, if verified, would have crumbled to the dust the entire edifice of Chief Watts' subtle deductions—reports which would have been like a wet blanket upon the energy of most men, and have affected, perhaps fatally, the convictions which else might have led to success.

"Have you seen the morning papers?" he asked of Sheridan Keene, when the latter reported soon after seven o'clock.

"No, I have not, Chief. Anything important in them?" Keene quickly inquired.

"It is reported that Alvord was seen in Mount Vernon the night before last."

"Impossible!"

"Surely so, if my theories have feet to stand upon."

"Who makes the statement?"

"One Patrick J. Ring. He owns the People's Opera House, in Mount Vernon. He reports that while on his way to the opera house last night, after eating his dinner, his attention was drawn to a fashionable closed carriage that was passing him. He states that it contained four men, one of whom was Alvord."

"Does he say that it was in the evening?"

"Yes; but that electric lights are on the corner at which he was standing at the time. He states that he plainly saw Alvord through the carriage window; that he knows him well, and is absolutely sure it was he. Ring was so surprised, moreover, that he crossed the street and asked an acquaintance, a man named Weber, if he had noticed the carriage."

"Had he noticed it?"

"Weber replied that he had, and further remarked that one of the men was Alvord. So both appear to have noticed him. Ring was so impressed that he called to see Chief of Police Foley, to tell him what he had seen; but the latter is now in Boston. He then hunted up Commissioner Dewitt, who gave the statements to the reporters."

"Do you know about what time the carriage was seen, Chief Watts?"

"Between six and seven in the evening."

"If the statement is true, Alvord could not possibly have been at the Touraine, nor in Boston, on the afternoon of that day."

"Surely not!"

"What do you think of the report?"

"I think the men are honest, but that both were mistaken," was the immediate reply. "It is very easy to mistake a man in the imperfect light of evening, and particularly under the conditions Ring described. They were very likely deceived by a personal resemblance. I shall hold to my belief that Alvord was in Boston that afternoon, and is still somewhere in this locality."

Having thus implied that his faith in his own deductions was not to be shaken, Chief Watts glanced over a tablet of memoranda made the night before.

"There is a side of this affair to which I now wish to call your attention, Detective Keene," he said, with grave earnestness. "For that reason I asked you to report early this morning."

"I inferred that you might have special work for me, Chief Watts."

"So I have. It concerns the relations which may exist between Alvord and the man you saw leave Mt. Vernon with him last Friday night. When you reported that circumstance to me, I said that if you could locate that man, you would find Alvord also. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways."

"It would seem so, Chief Watts, surely."

"Yet there is some mystery here that I find difficult to explain. I feel very sure that Alvord was at the Touraine day before yesterday, as stated. Yet I cannot learn that he had intercourse with any strangers, and he certainly appeared to have no companion. It is very possible that the man who left Mt. Vernon with him did not accompany him to Boston; yet I somehow cleave to my first belief—that they came here in company."

"Do you think they have some interest in common?"

"That is my belief. Otherwise this stranger would hardly become an accessory in such an affair, knowing that Alvord's guilt is already established."

"That is a point well noted, sir," said Keene, quickly.

"If, then, they have a mutual interest," Chief Watts earnestly continued; "it is odds that they have not permanently separated, despite that Alvord was alone at the Touraine. It may be that the other was engaged in securing a safe concealment for the defaulter, while Alvord waited in the Touraine, thinking he would be least likely to encounter an officer or attract attention in a hotel of that kind. His sudden disappearance, moreover, indicates that quarters were obtained for him by some person outside."

"That, Chief, is also very true."

"The special work I now want you to undertake, Detective Keene, is that of finding the stranger you saw with Alvord," Chief Watts explained. "You are familiar with his features, hence the work naturally falls upon you."

"I am very willing to undertake it, Chief," said Sheridan Keene, readily. "Have you any suggestion to offer?"

"One only. If you locate the man, do not give him occasion for alarm. Shadow him constantly, till you can learn whether he is in communication with Alvord, either directly or through a third person. Should you locate Alvord, you will know what to do."

"Assuredly!" said Keene, smiling.

"That is all, then."

The young man bowed, turned on his heel, and went out through the corridor and thence to Pemberton Square.

Boston is a tolerably large city. To locate in such a community a stranger from New York, whose name even was not known, is an undertaking that would stagger if not daunt the hearts of most men.

For a moment it staggered even Sheridan Keene. But it did not daunt him.

That evening he reported to Chief Watts at headquarters that his search that day had been futile. He was instructed to continue it.

On Saturday evening he made the same report—and received the same instructions.

He left the headquarters building with his perseverance unshaken.

As he crossed Pemberton Square, he noticed a man standing near the grim wall of the new court house, his features plainly revealed in the glare from a near electric light, and his gaze intently turned toward the lighted windows of Chief Watts' private office.

Sheridan Keene felt his blood move faster. Yet the stranger was not James Greenleaf. But he was the man with whom Keene

had seen James Greenleaf talking, in the gallery of the New York Stock Exchange.

The man named Haskins.

CHAPTER X.

RUNNING DOWN SIDE ISSUES.

For nearly half an hour Haskins continued watching the offices of the Inspectors of Police; and, for the same duration, Sheridan Keene continued watching Haskins. For the interest of the latter in this quarter, and the persistence with which it was maintained, soon assured the detective that a promising clue had finally been struck, and that Haskins now was probably associated with Greenleaf in Boston.

Through the one, Sheridan Keene now hoped to run down the other. Not for a moment did he lose sight of Haskins, nor even take a chance thereof by hurriedly reporting at headquarters.

It was nearly eight o'clock before Haskins left his position, and the detective followed him. By the way of Beacon and Park streets he gained the subway, and there boarded an uptown car. Sheridan Keene occupied the rear platform. At a quarter after eight Haskins entered a reputable boarding-house in one of the best avenues of the city; and five minutes later Detective Keene applied at the basement door, and presented a request for an interview with the landlady.

The latter responded, coming down to the dining-room, and expressing much surprise that a gentleman should have selected the lower door, instead of ringing at that surrounding the lofty flight of brown-stone steps.

Yet Detective Keene had already made his way into the dining-room.

"There is a reason for my conduct, madam," he said, closing the door by which she had entered the room. "I will explain to your perfect satisfaction."

"I hope so, sir," the lady answered, regarding him doubtfully, and remaining standing.

But Sheridan Keene had a taking way, and he soon favorably impressed her, even while he astonished her.

"I did not wish to question you in your parlor, madam, lest I should be observed or possibly overheard," he explained. "Have you lately received any new boarders here?"

"Yes, sir, I have. Only two or three days ago."

"Gentlemen?"

"Yes, sir."

"More than one?"

"I should say so, sir! No less than four, who now occupy my double front rooms over

the parlor. But why do you ask me these questions?"

"Because I am an inspector of police, and I suspect—pray, don't be alarmed, madam! I assure you, to begin with, that your house is known to be above reproach, and that any unpleasant incident occasioned by my duties here shall have absolutely no publicity. That is, madam, provided I have your co-operation, rather than if compelled to act against your wishes."

"What is the trouble" asked the woman, now reassured. "Have I admitted doubtful characters?"

"I suspect that is the case, and I wish to make sure," Keene replied. "You say there are four men?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did they come in company?"

"No, sir. The rooms were engaged last Wednesday afternoon, by a man named Greenleaf."

"What kind of a looking man, please?"

"A stout man, with a smooth face and small eyes—"

"That will answer, thank you! I suspected as much. When did his companions arrive?"

"One came the next evening, sir; and the other two the following morning."

"Is there among them a very large man, full featured, with a small, brown mustache—"

"You are describing Alvord, the defaulter!" the woman exclaimed, quickly. "I've seen his description in the papers."

"True!" said Keene, smiling. "Is he here?"

"No, sir; I wish he was!" and now the woman laughed significantly. "One can put up with a little annoyance for five thousand dollars."

The detective smiled and nodded.

"I am sorry also," said he. "But I suspect that your new boarders are in some way associated with Alvord, and may be informed of his movements."

"I hardly think so, sir. They have no mail, and one or two of them are out much of the time, as if on business."

"At all events, madam," said Keene; "I wish to watch them for a time. It probably will not be long, and you shall suffer no inconvenience. Haven't you a room I can occupy for a few days, as if I were a boarder here?"

And Sheridan Keene now displayed his credentials and badge.

"Well, sir, there is a small back room on the same floor with that occupied by these men," the woman admitted, rather reluctantly. "I suppose you can have that, sir; but

I hope this state of affairs will not last long. I shall not only be very nervous, but the reputation of my house may suffer."

"If you say and do nothing unusual, but leave the matter entirely to me, madam, I think I safely can assure you that there will be no disturbance, and that the actual facts will never be known."

"In that case, sir, you may have the room."

"On what floor is it, please?"

"Two flights up; one above the first hall."

"Is the door locked?"

"No, sir. I will show you the way, if—"

"Pardon! I prefer to go alone—as if my advent here were not recent. Kindly say nothing to these men, or to your help; but leave the matter entirely to me."

He gave her in addition other cautionary advice, and having further informed himself concerning the customs of the house, presently went up alone to the room given him. The halls were vacant through which he passed, and he noticed that the house was well furnished.

He easily located the room assigned to him, and noticed, ere entering his, that the door of what evidently was a commodious front room, was closed. Yet, above the silence in the hall, he could hear the sound of men's voices in animated conversation, if not even dispute.

Sheridan Keene immediately decided it was a circumstance of which he should take advantage. He glanced over the stairs, then stole to the closed door and listened. The first words that reached his ear told him he had run down the men interested with Alvord.

"There is no sense in searching longer for him, Jim, of that I am sure! The man has jumped the country, and we may as well go back to New York, or light out ourselves if you think he'll be caught. Even the inspectors have no clues to work on. I've been watching the Chief's office for an hour, and there's no sign of activity there."

"The activity of the inspectors is all on the outside," retorted Greenleaf, in surly tones.

"If you had been half as active as an inspector, Greenleaf," growled another, "he wouldn't have given you the slip the moment you landed in Boston in the same train with him. That was the lamest thing of all! Knowing as well as you did that he wasn't inclined to cut away for good and all, you should have kept your eye on him constantly, till he had been forced to go."

"Well, that's neither here nor there, and what's the use of constantly flinging that at me," cried Greenleaf, angrily. "The man escaped me, and that's all there is to it."

"I wish that were all of the whole affair."

"Well, it isn't!" Greenleaf cried, curtly. "The man must be found; and found by us, before Chief Watts can lay hands on him! If he is caught, he will tell all. He must be gotten out of the country. If it is known how we jobbed him in Saratoga, and how he has blown his money into Wall street, and through whom, Alvord is not the only one who will suffer for it. I say——"

"Shut up! You're speaking too loud! If a person were in the hall, your own words would be enough to convict you! Particularly with your reputation!"

There was the sound of a step approaching the door. Keene moved like a flash, and sought the back room; and though later he ventured forth, his further efforts that night were fruitless.

But he had heard enough to serve his present purpose, and to explain the features which had mystified Chief Watts. It was plain that Greenleaf, with interests too serious to be made public, had followed Alvord to Boston, only to lose him after their arrival. It was plain, too, that this racetrack gambler and his companions had committed themselves in their relations with Alvord, and that both their own safety, and perhaps that of men into whose hands Alvord's gigantic theft had willingly been received, depended upon the defaulter's flight and permanent disappearance.

That he now had them well cornered, and felt sure that Chief Watts would ultimately evoke the truth and bring them to justice, was enough for Sheridan Keene. And he settled himself to keep them under surveillance until next morning.

CHAPTER XI.

CONVERGING THREADS.

To the little army of men who were at work upon this case, and whose several duties necessitated their facing the inclement outdoor conditions that Sunday morning, the 28th of October, will be long remembered.

The day dawned cold and raw, with a beastly east wind tearing over the housetops and sweeping through the city streets, chilling one to one's very marrow.

The storm of that Sunday morning was so severe that only some extraordinary need could take a man out of doors, and Sheridan Keene, though now resolved to keep Greenleaf and his confederates under careful surveillance, felt it would be safe to leave them for the few minutes required for a very necessary report to Chief Inspector Watts. He did not go down to headquarters, however,

but availed himself of the nearest telephone station.

Chief Watts received the report, and, having taken Detective Keene's address, commanded him to remain in the house with the Greenleaf gang, and await instructions by letter or a messenger.

"There is one thing more, Chief Watts," called Keene, after concluding his report concerning Greenleaf.

"What is that?"

"I have this morning encountered a man who will presently come down to see you."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know. He is averse to informing me. His manner and observations, however, are significant of something important.

"Has he made any specific statement to you?"

"He declines to do so, but wishes to consult with you."

"Have you sent him down here?"

"He said that he would come during the morning. I think he is located in a house on Commonwealth Avenue.

"You don't mean that the person we are seeking is located there?"

"No, no, sir! I mean the man who will call upon you."

"I understand."

"I was led to suspect from something he said, however, that he possesses the information we desire."

"He appears to be very mysterious over it."

"That is true."

"Describe him partially!"

Detective Keene complied.

Chief Watts, had he had less confidence in the acumen of Sheridan Keene, might have had less hope from this mysterious development. But he knew also that mysteries sometimes bear good fruit, and that a five-thousand-dollar reward is not infrequently the incentive to curious schemes and indirect conduct.

As it happened, he was compelled to contain his impatient curiosity for less time than he had feared. Scarce half an hour after his talk with Detective Keene, a knock sounded at the door of his private office, and through the ground-glass pane he discerned the shadow of a man's dark figure.

He was seated at his desk at the time. He leaned forward and pressed in the desk a button loosing the electric latch of the door, and the latter sprang ajar.

It was immediately pushed open by the caller, and Chief Watts instantly recognized the person described by Detective Keene.

"Chief Watts, sir?"

"I am Chief Watts. Will you step in?"

The stranger was a well-dressed and intelligent-looking man. His shoes and clothes were somewhat wet with rain. He acknowledged with a bow the invitation to enter, and hastened to place his dripping umbrella in the stand for that purpose. In appearance and conduct he was a gentleman.

"I have called upon a rather curious mission, sir," the stranger said, smiling faintly, as he took the chair indicated and removed his hat. "But I think you will be inclined to consider it of sufficiently serious importance to warrant my intruding upon you."

Chief Watts smiled in a curious way.

"Chief Watts, I have called upon you at the request of another person, a friend of mine, here in town."

"Why didn't he call in person?"

"Because he does not at present wish to appear in the matter I have called, as his deputy, to discuss.

"In a nutshell," the stranger said, rapidly, "my friend knows just where you may put your hand upon Cornelius Alvord, the New York defaulter."

"Is he sure of it?" asked Chief Watts, without the slightest show of surprise.

"Yes, sir."

"Why don't he come forward, then, and impart his information?"

"Well, Chief Watts, the reward offered—"

"Ah, the reward is the reason!" interposed the Chief, with some curtness.

"Yes, sir, it is," the stranger readily assented. "My friend is a man who is tolerably well known, and he does not wish to publicly figure in this matter. Yet he would like, of course, to secure the reward offered for the information resulting in Alvord's arrest."

"Well?"

"He positively knows just where Alvord is at present hiding, from which, in all probability, he will make no immediate change. He——"

"What do you mean by immediate change?" interrupted Chief Watts.

"Neither to-day nor to-morrow, sir. Before that time his arrest can be effected."

"Well, go on about your friend. What are his wishes in the matter? Why does he object to my knowing his name?"

"He does not object to it, Chief, providing you will not disclose it."

"If that is his wish, he may safely confide in me."

"And you will not disclose it?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, sir, with a like understanding, I will tell you mine; and here is a note from my friend, which I now present in the way of credentials."

With which, stating at the same time his own name, the stranger produced a brief letter, and placed it in the hands of the Chief Inspector.

Chief Watts glanced it over, starting slightly at the end.

"What does he wish me to do in order to obtain the information he possesses?" he demanded, with his gaze reverting to that of the man opposite.

"He would like to see you in person, and then will tell you."

"Why doesn't he come down here?"

"Because he will not take that chance of being at present known in this affair. If, however, you would consent to meet me up-town at some later hour to-day, I will bring you together, and the entire matter can be easily and perfectly adjusted."

"And Alvord, meantime?" cried Chief Watts, rather censoriously.

"There will be no danger of losing sight of him! Of that I assure you!"

Chief Watts rose to his feet and glanced from the window; then, as if under sudden impulse, wheeled sharply about.

"Where do you wish me to meet you?" he asked, quickly.

The go-between named a convenient place.

"And the hour?" demanded the Chief.

"Say two o'clock, sir!"

"Enough! I'll be there!"

It ceased raining about noon, though the clouds still hung dense and heavy and the day continued damp and cold. About one o'clock Chief Inspector Watts donned a heavy

top-coat, increasing materially the amplitude of his imposing figure, and left the office at headquarters. He delayed only long enough for luncheon, then took a south-bound car via the subway, and at precisely two o'clock kept his engagement with his visitor of the morning.

The latter came as promptly as the Chief himself, and with him, as promised, was the retiring and sagacious "friend," who aimed to secure the reward from behind the brick wall of the Chief Inspector's secrecy and silence.

"So you are the man who knows where Alvord is located, are you?" Chief Watts asked, coming to the point at once.

"Yes, sir, I am," the gentleman gravely bowed.

"You are quite sure of it?"

"As sure as of the fact that I am looking at you, Chief Watts."

"Is Alvord here in this city?"

"Yes, sir, and within a half-hour's walk from here."

"Are you in communication with him?"

"No, sir. I am not even acquainted with him. Before I go further, chief, I wish to be assured that my name shall not appear in this affair."

"I already have promised your friend that I will not disclose it; I now give you the same assurance," replied Chief Watts, clever enough to give this man the right of way for the time at least.

"Your word is wholly sufficient, Chief. And my wish emanates only from an objection to becoming publicly known in this matter. Still, I naturally desire to secure the reward offered for the information I possess."

"Well, what more?"

"I want a paper signed by you, or by such persons as are to be concerned in making the arrest, stating that the information through which it is accomplished was imparted by me, and that I am the individual entitled to the reward. That paper having been signed and given me, I will show you the house, and the precise room, even, in which Alvord is at this moment concealed."

The demand was decidedly business-like, and the man was plainly not a person likely to be indulging in a hoax, nor proceeding thus without absolute knowledge.

Chief Watts saw his way to a finish, and at once took the bull by the horns.

"If I assure you that you shall have the paper at the proper time, will that be sufficient for the present?"

"Yes, sir."

"I give you that assurance, then," said Chief Watts, with a manner that carried conviction. "And I want you to understand that I am taking you on your word that your information is absolutely reliable."

"You may safely do so, sir."

"I shall communicate with the New York department, moreover, and have officers sent over here to look after Alvord when arrested. You fully appreciate, then, that this is not a matter for you to have any doubts about, do you?"

"Perfectly, Chief Watts!"

"Very good! Now, then, concerning Alvord. Are you positive that he will make no change of quarters?"

"If he does, I shall know it."

"Why do you object to telling me where he is, and enabling me to effectually guard against any possibility of his escape. If he is under cover, I can easily put the place under watch of my detectives until the New York officers arrive and the arrest has been made."

The informant demurred for a moment, then said agreeably:

"I don't object to telling you, Chief Watts, now that you have assured me that the paper I require shall be given me before Alvord is arrested."

"The New York officers cannot arrive here before to-morrow morning," replied the Chief. "If I can feel sure that Alvord's concealment is under the eyes of my detectives, I shall not make the arrest until the New York men are here. And before making it we will meet you collectively, and give you the paper you require. This plan surely should suit you."

"So it does, sir."

"And Alvord?"

"Has rented, and now occupies, a back room in a lodging-house on Huntington Avenue, near West Newton street."

"Do you know how long he has been there?"

"Since last Wednesday afternoon."

"Is it a single house or one of a block?"

"One of a brick block, sir."

"Will you presently show me the block?"

"Yes, sir."

Chief Watts stood silent for a moment, his grave face indicating a serious train of thought; then he abruptly laid his hand on the informer's shoulder.

"I want you to meet me here to-morrow noon," he said, gravely.

"I will do so."

"You then shall have the paper. Meantime, be discreetly silent upon the matter. If I am delayed, you must wait here until I come."

"I will do that, also!"

"Very good! Come, now, and show me the place! The arrest shall be made to-morrow!"

But from that hour, if the information received was reliable, the escape of Alvord would have been impossible.

Chief Watts returned to headquarters. That he was satisfied to rely upon the information he had received, and the observations he personally had taken, was manifest in his immediate action upon arriving at his office. He sent an officer with a note to Sheridan Keene, instructing him to arrest the Greenleaf gang at once, and bring them to headquarters.

Detective Keene read the note, bade the officer wait on the stairs, and, having put on his coat and hat, went and knocked sharply on Greenleaf's door.

"Who is that?" growled a startled voice within; while another said, disapprovingly:

"Be quiet! It may be the landlady! Come in!"

Sheridan Keene opened the door and entered. There were four men in the room.

"Good-afternoon, gentlemen!" he said, agreeably.

Greenleaf turned suddenly white, and sprang to his feet.

"Who are you?" he cried, sharply.

"My name is Keene, sir. I am one of the Boston inspectors. Chief Watts would like to see you gentlemen at his office."

"For what purpose? What has Chief Watts to do with us?"

"That he will tell you."

"I'll not go! Have you a warrant——"

"No!" said Keene, with sudden sternness.

"But I have an officer outside, and you will go with me, either in a hack or in a patrol wagon! You may make your choice!"

"Well, in that case," growled Greenleaf, sullenly, while consternation still silenced his companions, "we'll choose the hack!"

A half-hour later the four men were ushered into the private office of Chief Watts. Though little could be learned from them, there and then, they were held, despite their protests.

And, incidentally, it will be safe to assume that, when Chief Watts is through with them and the whole truth disclosed, they and all in league with them will have faced the bar of justice.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CLOSING IN.

Before dark that dismal Sunday all the preparations had been made for the final act of the Alvord drama, and the curtain hung ready to be rung down.

Chief Watts again communicated with Captain McClusky, imparting the startling news of the discovery of Alvord's location, and asking that another officer be sent to Boston who could positively identify the defaulter and assist in his arrest.

"I will send two," Captain McClusky responded, instantly making his decision. "I will detail Inspector Carey and Sergeant Edwin Armstrong."

"Will you have them come by the night express?"

"Without fail!" announced Captain McClusky. "Furthermore, Armstrong is just the man for this duty. He knows Alvord intimately, and has visited him in Mount Vernon. Both of these inspectors shall be in Boston early to-morrow morning."

They were met at the Southern station by Detective Keene, and, not far from two o'clock Monday afternoon, all the preliminaries having been satisfactorily arranged, a closed carriage drew up at the curbing a short distance from the suspected house on

Huntington Avenue, and two solidly-built men alighted.

One was Chief Inspector Watts, of Boston.

The other was Sergeant Edwin Armstrong, of New York.

The faces of both men were grave, their eyes determined, their manner composed.

The day was raw and cloudy. The sidewalks were damp from the previous day's storm, and water stood in puddles in the streets and gutters. In the distance was the great Mechanic's Building, and far away against the dull sky rose the tower and pinnacles of Trinity Church.

The block near which the carriage had halted was one of moderate length. Its front elevation was under the constant watch of Inspector Morrissey, and at the rear were Detective Tinker and Sheridan Keene. If the dull red walls of this building did indeed hide the massive figure of the great defaulter, the hour long since had passed when escape would be possible.

"Wait here, driver!" Chief Watts shortly commanded, when he and Armstrong had alighted and paused for a moment on the sidewalk.

"All right, Chief."

"I'll give you the word when I want you."

"Very well, sir."

"This way, Armstrong! Yonder is the house, the one with the lower window partly open."

"I see it, Chief."

And the two men walked moderately toward the dwelling.

They attracted no attention. The passers-by might have taken them for ordinary men upon an ordinary mission.

As they drew nearer the door, Chief Watts made a sign to a keen, thin-featured man who was loitering some distance away; and the man returned it, and presently took a station nearer the house.

Another man was approaching the dwelling, all by chance, and a total stranger to all concerned in the Alvord affair.

Not a little to the surprise of Chief Watts, this man turned and ascended the front steps to the door, precisely as the Chief did so in company with Sergeant Armstrong.

Chief Watts was quick to grasp the possibility of the curious little incident. He gave Armstrong a swift glance, nodded and smiled to the stranger, and mounted the steps at his side.

The stranger opened the door with a latch-key and entered.

Chief Watts thrust his foot forward and laid one hand on the door.

"I may come in presently," he said, blandly. "You can save me the trouble of ringing."

"Certainly."

The stranger murmured a word, and wondered; but nothing more. He evidently was a lodger, and in a moment had ascended the stairs to his own room.

Chief Watts adjusted the latch so that the door could be opened when he desired.

Again he made a sign to the officer near by, and Inspector Morrissey presently advanced and took a station at the doorstep.

Three or four minutes passed.

"Now, Sergeant Armstrong!" the Chief said, gently.

"All ready, sir."

Chief Watts softly opened the door, and the two men entered the hall, the Chief closing the door behind them.

It was an ordinary hall of a tolerably well-furnished lodging-house. The parlors were vacant, the curtains partially lowered; there was no inmate of the house visible. The presence of the officers was not so much as suspected.

"This way!" whispered Chief Watts.

Sergeant Armstrong nodded, and the Chief led the way up the stairs, both walking with cautious tread.

In a moment he paused before the closed door of one of the back chambers.

It was a moment of supreme suspense.

The work of many a weary day was at its culmination. The possibilities involved were more than words could enumerate. Despite all assurances, one bare uncertainty still existed; and though a thousand years were lived in the detective service, with all the experiences that such a life would include, there still would be no escaping the feelings and impressions of such a decisive moment.

Sergeant Armstrong was noticeably pale, and from the cheeks of Chief Watts, even, some of the habitual florid hue had vanished. But with both the occasion was suspense alone, the bare uncertainty of that one fatal moment.

Then Chief Watts raised his hand and rapped smartly on the panel of the closed door.

There was a sound from within, as of some one quickly starting. Yet what pen would dare attempt to portray the feelings of the one who heard, perhaps, in that sharp, resounding knock the first terrible tocsin of alarm.

Then a voice from within the room called deeply:

"Who is it?"

"I am the gas inspector, and want to look at your meter!" Chief Watts answered.

Again that momentary pause.

With cheeks pale, with nerves quivering, with startled eyes vainly seeking the machine mentioned—thus, possibly, the occupant of the room was wildly gazing about.

"There is no meter in this room!"

Despite the above conjecture, the voice was deep and firm that gave the answer.

"Yes, there is," cried Chief Watts, in tones consistent with his artful assumption. "There is one in the closet!"

"Oh, all right! Come in."

Had the words of the Chief carried some reassurance of safety to the speaker?

His step, a heavy stride, was heard across the floor.

The Chief stepped a little to one side, better revealing Sergeant Armstrong.

Within a hand was laid on the knob of the door. As the invitation to enter fell from his lips, the occupant of the room, whatever his sentiments, threw open the door—and beheld across the threshold the familiar face of an old acquaintance and friend, and at the latter's elbow the tall, imposing figure of Chief Inspector Watts.

The man who had opened the door, who had bidden them enter, who had voiced the knell of his own liberty for years to come—was the man they had been so assiduously and persistently seeking.

Cornelius L. Alvord, Jr., the defaulter of the First National Bank!

"Hello, Alvord, I'm glad to see you!" instantly cried Sergeant Armstrong; and the voice of the inspector was as genial and hearty as if the man addressed were still with name and honor unsullied by crime.

He was clad in his trousers and night-shirt, and evidently had been lounging in the room. It was a small chamber, twelve by fourteen feet in size, and in this cheap back room, tenanted in the name of Charles Smith, New York, a room bare of the luxuries of home, and in inconceivable contrast with his magnificent chambers at Mt. Vernon, Cornelius L. Alvord, the defaulter, had been in hiding for nearly a week, self-exiled from the world.

The room contained the daily papers, however, a box of choice cigars, and a quart bottle of whisky, partly emptied.

For a minute Alvord stood nonplussed, with his fleshy features growing ghastly pale and his lips quivering. He seemed unable to comprehend the situation, and to realize that the figure of Sergeant Armstrong was not the vision of a dream.

Then he choked slightly, drawing a deep breath, and pulled himself together.

"Hello, Armstrong!" he rejoined, huskily, extending his hand. "How do you do?"

Then he wheeled about, reeling slightly, his large figure unsteady upon his limbs; and then he started to cross the room and approached the window.

As he did so he placed both hands in his hip pockets, a habit of his.

Chief Watts misinterpreted the movement, and suspected he sought a weapon, either for violence or suicide. With a single bound the Chief had overtaken him, and had his wrists held with a grip of steel.

"None of that!" he comanded, sternly.

Alvord looked curiously back at him over his shoulder; then understood.

"It's only a habit," he explained, in tones he still was striving hard to govern. "I am not armed."

He spoke the truth. The hip pockets were empty.

Meantime Sergeant Armstrong had closed the door; and when he turned again, Alvord had in part recovered from his surprise, and,

though pale and haggard, was able to command his feelings.

"Well, Armstrong," he said, deeply, looking the detective in the face; "I suppose the game is up and I am under arrest."

"Nothing less, Mr. Alvord," said Sergeant Armstrong, firmly, yet not with austerity.

"I am to go back to New York?"

"Surely!"

"Well, if I must go, I am glad you are the officer to take me," said Alvord, with manifest relief. "I know you, and I do not know a lot of men who might have been sent after me."

"This is Chief Inspector Watts, Mr. Alvord."

The defaulter bowed slightly.

"Must I hurry to prepare myself, Chief Inspector Watts?" he asked.

The Chief shook his head.

"No; take your time," he answered.

"Well"—and for the first time something like a faint smile rose over Alvord's pale face, the smile of a man who in arrest, even, found relief from solitude and its nameless horrors—"well, Chief Watts, this is once the gas-man fooled me!"

Chief Watts made no reply.

For ten minutes, while the defaulter completed his toilet, the detective patiently waited. From the box on the table he handed each a cigar, and the brand was of the best.

"Have you remained in this room, Alvord, since you left the Touraine?" the Chief asked, as he accepted the cigar.

"Yes, Chief Watts," was the reply. "I have not been out of this room since I entered it. I shall not feel sorry to go out now, even under these conditions!"

"Why have you kept yourself so close?"

"You don't have to look at me and ask that question, do you, Chief?" Alvord demanded, drawing up his three hundred and twenty pounds of flesh and tissue.

"But there are other large men in this city—men as large as you," said the Chief Inspector.

"Yes, that no doubt is true," admitted Alvord; "but no Chief Inspector is looking for them, and that makes all the difference in the world!"

Chief Watts smiled faintly at this, and, as

the defaulter seemed communicative, he sustained the conversation.

"When did you leave New York, Mr. Alvord?" he asked.

"On the night of the twenty-third," said Alvord, knotting his scarf.

"Did you come alone?"

The defaulter wheeled sharply about and looked at the Chief with a frown.

"I came here alone!" he replied, evasively, meaning that room.

"Alvord," demanded Chief Watts, sternly; "who is James Greenleaf?"

"You can find out by making inquiries in Wall street."

"What have been your relations with him?" But Alvord shook his head decisively.

"I shall say nothing of others," he replied, firmly. "What must be said of me, is enough."

"Quite likely! However, I already have Greenleaf and his confederates in custody, and I will see that they receive their just deserts, either through your confession or my own efforts. Of that you may rest assured!" said Chief Watts, with convincing severity. "Now, Alvord, what do you mean to do? Will you fight requisition papers, or will you waive that and return to New York without any trouble?"

"I'll go back," said Alvord, instantly.

"When?"

"By the first train out of Boston. What time does it go?" asked the defaulter, carelessly.

"A train leaves for New York at five o'clock."

"Very well, sir! I will be ready if the New York officers are."

Sergeant Armstrong gave Chief Watts a quick glance and nod.

The Chief put one more question.

"What have you to say about this matter, Alvord, anyway?" he demanded.

Alvord turned about and looked the Chief in the face.

"There is very little for me to say!" he replied, with a ponderous swing of his huge figure. "I have played and lost, and now I will take the consequences."

Chief Watts rose to his feet.

"Are you ready?"

"All ready."

"Come, then!"

There were no manacles used.

Together the trio quickly descended the stairs and emerged from the house. Chief Watts softly closed the door. A gesture dismissed the watchful officer. A sign brought the waiting carriage to the spot. The prisoner and his custodians entered it. Then it wheeled rapidly away.

A master in his art from the very first, Chief Watts had arrested and removed his prisoner from the house in Huntington Avenue without the inmates becoming aware even that he was there.

* * * * *

At five o'clock that night, making his way through the morbidly curious crowd that had gathered near, a slouchily-dressed man in baggy trousers and a light top-coat, with soiled shoes, his hat drawn over his eyes, and his massive figure bowed and unsteady, boarded the steps of the New York train, while a grave-visaged inspector of police stood at either side.

The man was the defaulter, Alvord, leav-

ing the city of Boston, probably for the city's good.

He left behind him only two things especially worthy of note in closing.

One—his picture in the "Rogues' Gallery!"

The other—a mantle of well-earned glory, upon the shoulders of Chief Inspector Watts and Detective Keene.

THE END.

Following the brilliant capture of Alvord, Inspector Watts and Detective Keene had scarcely time to recover from the strain they had been through before they were called up to grapple with one of the strangest cases of robbery ever brought to the attention of the police. Both officers were destined to appear again as the principal characters, and to solve the mystery on the same novel lines which have already made them so well known to readers of the SHIELD WEEKLY. What this case was, and the way the two famous officers went to work on it, will be told in next week's SHIELD WEEKLY (No. 4), in a story entitled "Captured by Inches; or, A Curious Robbery in High Life."

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No. 4.—Cornered by Inches; or, A Curious Robbery in High Life.

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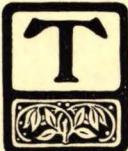
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